

# Stehekin Solid Waste Management Public Meeting Discussion Topics

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

North Cascades National Park  
Lake Chelan National Recreation Area  
Ross Lake National Recreation Area



Please join the National Park Service (NPS) at public meeting to discuss how to effectively implement changes to the park's solid waste management service, including establishing and collecting fees for service, in Stehekin. These public meetings are scheduled as part of a public review process for the special regulation authorizing a transfer station in Stehekin to accept solid waste generated within the park boundary from non-NPS activities and relocate the facility to a site that does not meet all regulatory siting criteria for a new solid waste facility due to geographic constraints within the Stehekin River valley. The following topics and questions will be discussed during the workshop portion of the public meetings:

## Efficiency Improvements

The NPS is in the process of replacing two 17-year-old stationary trash compactors (1/3 cubic yard capacity), which require plastic-lined cardboard boxes to contain compacted trash for transport, with a large stationary compactor and roll-off compaction containers (30 cubic yard capacity). This new trash compaction system is expected to reduce the number of labor hours needed to process waste by approximately 30%, as well as eliminate approximately \$5,000 in annual material costs, relative to the current trash compaction system.

*Are there additional efficiency improvements you would suggest to keep operating costs low?*

## Operational Changes

The NPS will need to establish staffed operating hours to receive and process trash and recyclable materials. NPS employees currently spend an average of 20 hours per week processing solid waste. Increasing the number of hours the facility is staffed would increase the cost of the operation and ultimately the unit rate for trash disposal. Comparable transfer station operations at San Juan Island (18 hrs/wk) are open to the public Friday through Sunday, 10 am – 4 pm.

*What are the best and worst days of the week and hours of the day for transfer station operating hours?*

*What are the minimum requirements for summer operations (May – Oct) and winter operations (Nov – Apr)?*

The NPS is proposing to charge a single weight-based unit rate (\$/lb) for all users. Trash will be received and weighed by an NPS employee during staffed operating hours. The total quantity of trash received will be tracked by user account. Trash and recycling will only be accepted from users who have an established account with the NPS for invoicing and billing. Accepted payment methods for electronic payment (via [www.pay.gov](http://www.pay.gov)) include bank account, PayPal account, and debit or credit card. Checks may be submitted for payment, as well, although electronic payment is preferred. Cash will not be accepted at the transfer station.

*Are you willing to use an electronic payment system (preferred), or do you have limiting circumstances that require you to pay via check?*

*What is the least-frequent billing cycle that would be acceptable to you? E.g. quarterly, biannually, annually, etc.*

*If you are a business owner, are invoicing/billing needs different from your needs as a residential customer?*

Large, bulky items like appliances, furniture, construction and demolition debris, and other items that cannot be compacted have typically been left adjacent to the transfer station on a platform, where they are then individually loaded by the NPS contracted solid waste hauler onto a truck for transport and disposal. The NPS is investigating alternative methods to charge for, responsibly store, and streamline the transportation and disposal process for these large items. While a weight-based unit rate for trash is considered to be the most unbiased fee structure, a volume-based and/or appliance flat-rate may provide a more appropriate fee structure for bulky items.

*What is the most appropriate and equitable fee structure for large, bulky items? E.g. weight-based, volume-based, appliance flat-rate, etc.*

## Waste (and Cost) Reduction

To reduce the overall cost of solid waste management for non-NPS users in Stehekin, the park is requesting a waiver to NPS policy that typically requires the NPS to charge full cost recovery for recycling. The NPS instead intends to fully subsidize the recycling program and offer free recycling to all users. Recyclable materials must be sorted and will be limited to those items that are accepted at the Chelan Transfer Station. The NPS also intends to continue accepting household hazardous waste items for free as long as Chelan County continues to offer their annual free collection event.

*Do you expect to increase the amount of material you recycle or divert from the landfill under this plan? If so, by how much?*

For the past several years, the NPS has maintained a small vermicomposting operation near the transfer station that is used to compost shredded paper and organics. Bones, meat, and dairy products are not encouraged, both because the worms have limited tolerance and these items attract wildlife. Food scraps tend to have high moisture content, making them heavy and thus expensive to dispose of when trash disposal rates are weight-based.

*Would you use an NPS-managed centralized composting system for organics, or do you have a wildlife-resistant composting system that you intend to use for diverting organics from the waste stream?*

The Stehekin community has benefited greatly from collective use of “The Mall”, a designated area within the current transfer station where potential beneficial re-use items in good condition can be dropped off or picked up by anyone at any time. NPS employees periodically sort through these items and dispose of anything that has failed to circulate back out into the community in a timely manner. “The Mall” serves a great function by keeping useful items out of the landfill, but once fees are charge to dispose of trash, this operation has a high potential for misuse and abuse without some level of oversight and enforcement.

*How can the Stehekin community maintain the intent and benefits of “the Mall” if the NPS moves to fixed operating hours and charging for waste disposal at the existing transfer station?*

A significant percentage of public comments to the *Replacement of Administrative Facilities at Stehekin Environmental Assessment* classified the proposed rates as being unaffordable to private businesses and residents, forcing people to “opt out” of using the NPS solid waste service. The only legal alternatives would require waste generators to: 1) self-haul solid waste to a county transfer station, or 2) dispose of solid waste on land the person owns within the National Recreation Area (NRA) so long as it does not pose an adverse effect on human health or the environment (as described by criteria in 40 CFR Part 257). Outdoor fires containing garbage, plastics, or any substance other than natural vegetation are illegal in Washington State (RCW 70.94.6512). Independent establishment of a facility within Lake Chelan NRA to manage non-compostable solid waste generated by anyone other than the landowner would be classified as a new solid waste disposal site and subject to 36 CFR Part 6.4 restrictions, including a required permit request and approval by the NPS Regional Director.

After considering comments received during the public comment period and the limited alternatives available to the Stehekin community, the park proposes to submit a request on behalf of all non-NPS users to waive cost recovery requirements for providing solid waste service. Specifically, the park is requesting to waive the cost of the recycling operation, waive cost recovery for capital improvements, and pursue a phased implementation of rate recovery for the remaining cost of providing trash management to the Stehekin community.

*Do you consider the reduced rate – including free recycling, no increase in rates resulting from capital improvements, and a phase-in of the remaining costs over six years – to be fair and reasonable given the logistical challenges and expense of solid waste management in a remote community like Stehekin?*

*Are there any other factors that would prevent you from participating in an NPS solid waste management service?*