Saco- It's time to do more than talk about our Solid Waste Issues

Saco, once an innovator and a leader in our handling of municipal solid waste ("trash"), has been status quo for quite some time, while the rest of Greater Portland has caught up in waste reduction initiatives, and in many cases improved on what we helped start. Recognizing the room for improvement, as well as the economic and environmental benefits, the City Council has made *"improving our solid waste disposal service results"* one of its top priorities over the next two years.

Reduced staffing during tight budgets back in 2009 cut our public outreach and school programming with regards to household recycling. Now, the message is changing. World markets for recycled wastes are down, which is creating even more emphasis on finding the best disposal options for our waste streams. Here are the three best things you can do instead of throwing items in the trash:

- **Reduce**- Reducing the amount of waste created and disposed of in the first place is where real sustainability comes into play. Think of all the small changes you could make in the way packaging and products enter and leave your home (ie: reusable water bottles)

Waste Management Hierarchy

- **Reuse**- "One person's trash is another's treasure". There are creative ways to reuse so many materials that are landfilled or incinerated each year (ie: donations or yard sales).

- **Recycle**- Separating and processing disposed items into new products again. If Saco increased recycling by just 10% the community would save $60,000 per year. Saco ranks 14th out of 26 neighboring communities in recycling rate, at only 23%. Measure your success- brown curbside bins should be out every week, and filled just as much as your green trash bin.

Throwing things away costs our community over $1.2 Million per year. Solid waste disposal costs approximately $110.00 per household, where as recycling costs about $43.00 per household. Everything deferred from your green trash container saves the City money, and items diverted from City collection completely, saves a lot of money.

Recycling is Easy! Our contracted disposal facility, Eco-Maine has devised a quick and easy way to check if something is recyclable or not, and they even have an app for that! Visit their website to see how to add this handy tool to your daily routine. Make recycling fun! http://www.ecomaine.org/recyclopedia/