

Big Sky recycling facility looking for new location

By LAURA BELL
Lone Peak Lookout

Consumer recycling could be leaving Town Center as early as Feb. 15th.

For the past six years Town Center has hosted the cardboard, plastic, aluminum and paper and magazine recycling at no charge on their property.

Now there is potential for real estate development at the site and if a new location is not established, Big Sky consumers will either have to transport their recycling to Bozeman or another location or put their recyclables in the trash which is not a desirable option as the volume of recycling directly reduces the trash entering the landfill from Big Sky.

Jim Simon of Gallatin Solid Waste Management District has been working with Town Center for the past 18 months to locate a new site. "We've been striking out due to traffic control and garbage issues," he says.

"We have 17 sites throughout the county and we provide the bins and we pay to haul the recycling. Out of the 17 sites we have all of them but three are on private property.

"We run into problems where land is developed or property owner does not want on property anymore. Or if increase in traffic causes problems," said Simon.

For example the Belgrade River Rock site was recently lost as the area is going to be developed.

"If someone is willing to donate a sliver of land we have a site agreement that resolve them from all liability," Simon said.

Members of the Big Sky Natural Resource Council have spearheaded the efforts to find a new location, identifying suitable land and approaching landowners. The Big Sky Natural Resource Council is part of the Big Sky Community Corporation (BSCC) though executive director Jessica Wiese says that many individuals are involved

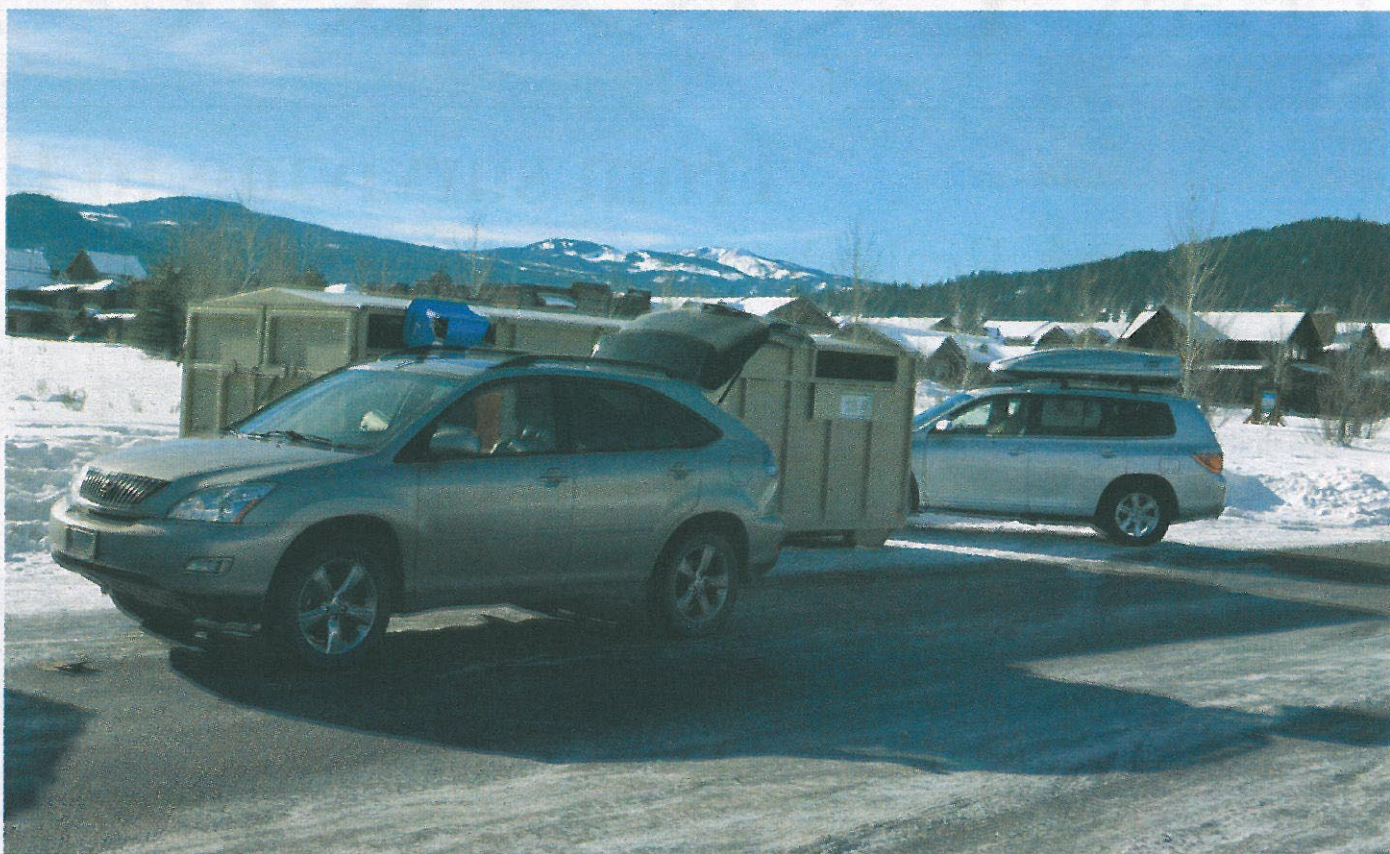


Photo by LAURA BELL

Because of pending development plans, the recycling facility in the Town Center must be relocated. Everyone agrees that recycling is vital to Big Sky; the only problem is finding a suitable location.

with the project BSCC will send out agendas and facilitate meetings.

"We are trying to help everybody get together and come up with a solution," said Wiese.

Town Center's Ryan Hamilton is helping an ad hoc committee help a find a temporary or more permanent solutions.

"We are very supportive of recycling. There could potentially be land in Town Center whether purchased, park land or open space," he says.

Dave Leverett, owner of Full Circle Recycling, has been collecting Big Sky's consumer and commercial recycling for more than a dozen years. Should the Town Center bins be removed he will still collect commercial recycling from the various locations.

"Town Center has been great host

for all of this time, but now it is getting to the point that the area is getting too busy and it's time to get a permanent spot so we aren't blocking traffic," Leverett said.

"Unless the community can find a spot that will work on a temporary and long-term plan, recycling will be gone," he reiterated.

According to Jim Simon, some of the challenges facing Big Sky include the high volume of recycling from residents and businesses as well as the lack of recycling centers.

"There are several areas in Bozeman where recycling can be dropped off - Wal-Mart, Kmart, near Bozeman Deaconess Hospital and even curbside recycling services for City of Bozeman Solid Waste/Garbage Collection customers," Simon explained.

Businesses who host sites see the

added benefit of bringing people to their store, he further explained. "For instance Home Depot has recycling while Lowe's doesn't. Someone needing something from one of those stores might go to Home Depot to drop off their recycling and instead of going to Lowe's just shop at Home Depot."

This is the same reason that Target offers glass recycling. It is good for the company's image, he reasoned.

While a short-term Big Sky site might come available all parties concerned are looking for a permanent solution. This would incorporate building concrete pads, fences and storm water control. Simon believes this will cost about \$75,000 to \$100,000 to install.

"Most people really want to see recycling in Big Sky, but not in their backyards," both Simon and Wiese said.