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Berkeley gets state grant for expansion of recycling

By JOHN ECKHOUSE

BERKELEY — Recycling, which has become almost second nature to residents here, will soon become even easier.

The Berkeley Ecology Center recently won a \$90,000 grant from the state Solid Waste Management Board to operate a curbside pickup of recyclable materials.

The center has been picking up bundled newspapers from city residents for the past six years, and the grant will enable the program to expand to the collection of glass and cans. Kathy Evans, administrator at the ecology center, hopes the program can be started in April.

The only thing that might delay the start of the new collection is the acquisition of proper equipment. "It's really difficult to find good used trucks," Ms. Evans said.

She is looking for three trucks that will be specially altered for the program. Bins will be mounted on the flatbed trucks to collect the glass, cans and newsprint and are designed so that they can be removed with a forklift.

The grant will cover only the cost of the equipment. Ms. Evans said the salaries of employees would come from the proceeds of selling the recyclable material to various dealers in the area.

Berkeley already has three other recycling programs, two of which make pickups at a resident's door, but they are all cooperating in the new program.

Pam Belchamber, project director for the recycling center operated at Grove St. and Dwight Way,

said "their curbside pickup will impact our program by about 30 percent which is good, because there will be a net increase in the amount of recyclables recovered." The recycling center collects about 160 tons a month of glass, tin, aluminum, newsprint and cardboard that residents donate. Sales of these items brought in over \$60,000 last year.

Other programs are operated by Recovery Recycling and the Berkeley Youth Recycling Center. Recovery Recycling collects items at a customer's door for a set fee, while the youth project is a non-profit operation. It collects materials door-to-door, serving about 200 homes at pre-

recycled materials they individually collect. Eventually a new program to purchase newsprint, cans, bottles and cardboard will also open on the site.

The city of Berkeley purchased the land in 1973 as a replacement for the present landfill, which is expected to reach capacity by 1981. Final plans have not been approved, but tentatively the city plans to collect and transfer garbage to other landfills from the new site and it may try to burn some of the refuse to produce steam for sale to local industries.

Ms. Belchamber said her group is looking forward to the opening of the new facility because they, too, are

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sent, with no charge for the collection of aluminum, tin, cardboard, glass separated by color, newspapers and scrap iron.

Altogether the programs collect about 250 tons a month of goods for recycling, and officials hope the new curbside pickups will double that amount. "With combined efforts we plan to cut the waste stream in Berkeley 12 to 15 percent from what it is now," said Ms. Belchamber, who is also a member of the city solid waste management commission. At present the amount of goods recycled is about 4 percent of the total refuse produced in Berkeley.

All the recycling services will jointly work together at a centralized location beginning in mid-1980 if present plans are approved by the city and the state. Community Conservation Centers, the group that operates the site at Grove St. and Dwight Way, has asked the state waste board for a grant to operate the proposed facility at the city's new garbage transfer station at 2nd and Gilman streets.

At first the recycling groups will use the area to separate and store

running out of adequate storage room. "We're at a saturation point right now," she said. "The neighbors are going crazy."

Some other local cities have started curbside pickups of recyclables and all claim a high degree of success. The city of Livermore began a pilot program in the spring of 1978 with the assistance of the Oakland Scavenger Co.

Every house in the town of 50,000 is served twice a month by a specially designed scavenger company truck that has storage bins for clear glass, mixed glass, newspapers and metal cans. Aluminum is not separated from tin to discourage pilferage in front of the homes.

Edward Schilling, the assistant city manager of Livermore, said about 90 tons a month of recyclables are collected in this way. The city has hoped the program would pay for itself by selling the salvaged goods, but there was a net loss last year of \$22,000 even after sales of \$35,000 of material to scrap dealers.

A recent study showed that 38 percent of the households participate in

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the program at least once a month. "It's very convenient," Schilling said. "I never recycled before we started the program and now it's just second nature."

A curbside pickup program in Palo Alto currently serves just under two-thirds of the single-family dwellings in the city of 65,000. The program will serve all homes by April and will expand to cover apartment buildings six months after that.

Robert Wenzlau, the original coordinator of the recycling program and now a consultant to it, said 80 percent of the households participate in the program at least once a month. He said the collection of recyclables amounts to 160 tons a month at a net cost (after selling the newsprint, cans, bottles and cardboard) of about 25 cents a household

per month.

One of the oldest curbside recycling programs in the area is operated by the city of El Cerrito. The program started in 1977 and became free in April 1978. Trucks serving 49,000 residents in El Cerrito, Albany and Kensington collect glass, newsprint and aluminum from each house once a week.

The city also operates two other recycling programs, one that pays residents for their recyclables and one where people donate their goods to the city. It cost the city \$183,000 to run all three programs last year, but officials said the results justify the cost.

Last year the city collected an average of 350 tons a month of recyclables and achieved a reduction of about 18 percent in the amount of refuse going to landfill. Lois Boyle, assistant director of community services for the city, said the goal for

next year is to collect 431 tons of recyclables and reduce the amount of municipal refuse going to landfill by 25 percent.

Landfills are generally considered the antithesis of recycling, but not to the present operators of the Berkeley landfill. After winning the contract to manage the area last summer, the present operators changed the name to Bay Cities Resource Recovery Depot to encourage conservation and recycling.

Robert Beatty, one of the operators, said about 350 tons of refuse are dumped daily at the site and his group of workers manages to recycle 14 tons of that a day. Most of the material recovered is ferrous metal, though aluminum, brass, copper, lead, lumber, bicycles, household goods and even a truck load of Christmas trees have been salvaged in recent weeks.

Beatty thinks the life of the landfill

can be prolonged if the city will let him expand his recycling efforts. He said he hopes to soon open a composting center and a concrete recycling facility on the site.

Beatty estimated composting could divert over 100 tons a month from the landfill, while operating a concrete and asphalt crusher could eliminate up to 4000 tons a day from going to landfill. He said the city now operates a special landfill where it charges contractors to dump concrete.

"They make \$40,000 a year off of that," Beatty said. "They'd lose that income, but we've said we would give them a share of the income from operating the crusher and I think that would be more than their present income. Besides, we could sell the material to be reused as a base material for paving new roads instead of just throwing it away."