

## We Need **Better Trash Options** for Sullivan County!

As County legislators continue to search for ways to deal with the County's growing trash problems, the following questions need to be answered:

**Question 1. Why are legislators even considering a trash incinerator as a viable solution?** The **only** response to the County's Request for Proposals (RFP) on constructing an incinerator came from Reworld, whose proposal clearly states their business plan may require **importing** trash and/or **paying extra** money to meet Reworld's profit demands, in a so-called "put-or-pay" system. Reworld's proposed trash removal contract specifically says "...*We also **recommend** it be structured as **a put or pay** with sufficient performance to **support project financing**. To be clear, the County will not need to guarantee any indebtedness, only its performance under the contract, which shall **primarily be the delivery of sufficient quantities of MSW**..." even if that means trucking in tons more trash.*

**Question 2. Why doesn't the County RFP specifically rule out importation of trash or required cash equivalents?** This is unknown. All it says is the trash is to be "...*waste generated within Sullivan County and to develop agreements with surrounding counties.*" There is no definition of the 'surrounding counties' or any limitation as to how much trash might be imported from them.

**Question 3. Will Sullivan County be next?** This business plan from Reworld (formally Covanta) requiring a trash volume minimum or cash payments has caused bankruptcies or near-bankruptcies in, but not limited to the following:

- Harrisburg, PA:
  - Claremont, NH
  - Poughkeepsie, NY
  - Detroit, MI
  - Hudson Falls, NY
  - Lake County, FL
- and
- New Jersey counties

Burning garbage destroys human and environmental health, local economy and property values. Reworld's "put-or-pay" business plan demands increased trash volume for their profits. Reducing trash volumes can and must be done. Los Angeles among other places including Alachua County, FL, **have reduced their trash volumes by over 50 percent or more.** Sullivan County **must adopt plans to do the same!**

Star D. Hesse, Sullivan County resident  
B. Arrindell, Director, Damascus Citizens for Sustainability

see also 1.Better Trash Options-4/2026 & Trash In or Cash Out -Neither a good choice!

# Better Trash Options for Sullivan County - April, 2026

## What Sullivan County has now:

- Single stream 'recycling' collection at homes and at transfer stations
- Bags of mixed solid waste collection at homes and trash collection at transfer stations
- Private trash collection of mixed waste from individual homes, businesses & municipalities.
- Limited single stream 'recycling' (e.g. paper, cans, bottles...) mixed together often gets landfilled.

**-The County Legislature is considering a "Waste-to-Energy" incinerator, which is a misleading industry term for a TRASH incinerator in Sullivan County.**

## Why avoid incineration?

Incinerators produce pollution of air, water and land

Incinerators are economically destructive to surrounding areas by;

- Lowering property values
- Discouraging tourism/second homeowners
- Endangering human health - plants and animals are also harmed
- The burned material becomes toxic ash, 100 tons of trash becomes 30 tons of toxic ash needing disposal in landfills where it poses a greater toxic threat to groundwater. Recyclable, sale-able materials are not saved before burning.
- Incinerators are very expensive to build, and often mean the operating municipality must import trash to meet volumes required by the facility or pay more under their "put or pay" contracts.

## How to avoid incineration?

**Reduce overall trash volume by:**

1. Maximizing what the public reuses, recycles, or composts. Recycled and reused materials are resources with monetary value.
2. Engaging businesses, schools, government and other public facilities to also recycle.
3. Establishing universal composting programs for households, multi-family units and businesses (especially food related) and for yard wastes.
4. Building materials to be reused and recycled as much as possible to reduce construction and demolition waste.
5. Commit to increasing community education, and tracking waste reduction progress.

## What is needed to avoid incineration – Reduce the trash volume!

- Sullivan County needs a materials recycling facility that compliments single stream collection and reduces overall trash volume by 25 to 30% by people bringing and self-sorting their items.
- Encourage Rescue & Repair options, like 'Repair Cafes' for highest reuse of items.
- Universal composting programs that are easily and readily available.
- Initiate "pay-as-you-throw," charging for trash by weight as an incentive for people to minimize trash. This reduces trash volumes by 44% on average, immediately.
- Any inappropriate dumping must be penalized.

**For example, Los Angeles reduced its trash volume by 65%!**

**WHAT TO DO?** - be informed, learn about options and implications, contact county legislators (they will be making the decisions), write Letters to the Editor, help educate other people.

**ALSO** under NY SEQRA (6 NYCRR part 617) may require a full EIS before moving forward.

**For a blueprint to reach these goals - see Community Zero Waste Roadmap**

**"ON THE ROAD TO ZERO WASTE"** <https://bit.ly/47W0VZy>

SEE more ->

**Here is some of the latest information on pollution from these incinerators and IMPORTANT economic details:**

In 2022, visitors and second-home owners contributed nearly \$900 million to Sullivan County's economy - **this is one quarter of Sullivan's total economy** ([lotscap.com/economy/36105/](https://lotscap.com/economy/36105/)) and according to Sullivan County's own Second Home Study ([www.sullivanyny.gov/sites/default/files/departments/DPEM/Resources/secondhomeownerstudy.pdf](https://www.sullivanyny.gov/sites/default/files/departments/DPEM/Resources/secondhomeownerstudy.pdf)), rural values including clean air and water, and view-sheds are very important to second home owners/buyers choice to visit and to have a second home in SC and to keep their investment. (SC total GDP (2022, Thousands) \$ 3,982,842 ([lotscap.com/economy/36105/](https://lotscap.com/economy/36105/)))

This economic sector generates almost \$48 million in local taxes and letting Sullivan County households save \$3,370 in taxes, on average. A trash incinerator would cause air and water pollution, noise, and odors, thereby eroding tourism, tax revenues, and lowering property values. (<https://esd.ny.gov/sites/default/files/Catskills-2022-NYS-Tourism-Economic-Impact.pdf>)

Additionally, Sullivan County's highly positive and growing farming sector would be hurt by the pollution from an incinerator. This sector is about another **1/4 of SC's economy** ([www.sullivanyny.gov/Departments/PlanningEnvironmental/AgriculturalProtection](https://www.sullivanyny.gov/Departments/PlanningEnvironmental/AgriculturalProtection)).

Also, even the newest trash incinerators produce damaging air and water pollution - see clarifying analysis here: FALSE that "new incinerators don't hurt you" white paper done for Broward County, FL. Find it here: <https://www.energyjustice.net/fl/health.pdf>  
32 pages - 21 of the report plus 11 pages of references or see 3 page condensed version here: <https://energyjustice.net/incineration/healthstudies.pdf>

The human health impacts of the emissions from these facilities are well documented, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/31535434/> - with full analysis here: <https://www.nrdc.org/bio/daniel-rosenberg/burned-why-waste-incineration-harmful>

Plus, Monticello area is considered a Potential Environmental Justice area ([www.ejstatebystate.org/directory/new-york](https://www.ejstatebystate.org/directory/new-york)) and in New York, adding more polluting facilities to such an area requires additional layers of review under SEQRA and may be prohibited.

We ask the legislature to stop pursuing an incinerator, there are safer options! Remind them that it is their obligation to protect the health and welfare of those living, working, and visiting Sullivan County.



Please review the suggestions and concerns above and listed at:

Learn more at:

[www.damascuscitizensforsustainability.org/2025/05/26/incinerator-proposal-in-sullivan-county-continues/](https://www.damascuscitizensforsustainability.org/2025/05/26/incinerator-proposal-in-sullivan-county-continues/)

**This document by: Damascus Citizens for Sustainability [DamascusCitizens.org](https://DamascusCitizens.org)**

## **Trash in or Cash out?- Neither a good choice!**

**Burning any amount of garbage is bad. Importing garbage is crazy.**

**Sullivan County is considering a trash incinerator**, has put out a Request for Proposals (RFP) and preliminarily received one, from Reworld. Their proposal requires potentially importing trash or paying extra to meet Reworld's profit demands (called "put-or-pay").

QUESTION: Why are legislators even considering an incinerator when there are so many impacts? See link to 'Better Trash Options' below. **At the very least, the County's own RFP should specifically rule out any importation of trash or the requirement of cash equivalents. But it doesn't!** - it does say "waste generated within Sullivan County and to develop agreements with surrounding counties." - there is no definition of 'surrounding.'

### **Incinerators Burn Money**

**Will Sullivan County be next?** This business plan from Reworld (formally Covanta) that requires a trash volume minimum or cash payments has caused these bankruptcies or near-bankruptcies:

- **Harrisburg, PA:** incinerator primarily responsible for bankrupting Pennsylvania's capital city
- **Claremont, NH:** 20-year "put-or-pay" contracts caused 29 towns to file for bankruptcy in 1993, which the court denied, requiring that taxes be raised to pay back the incinerator for waste the towns did not even produce
- **Hudson Falls, NY and Lake County, FL:** deep incinerator debt due to long-term contracts favorable to the industry
- **Poughkeepsie, NY:** incinerator fails to bring in enough revenue from tipping fees and electric sales to operate without millions in annual subsidies from the county
- **Detroit, MI:** largest single creditor in city bankruptcy, costing the city \$1.2 billion in debt payments
- **New Jersey's** five incinerators: \$1.5 Billion state bail out because they could not attract enough waste to operate at capacity

list above from slide 16 of <https://www.energyjustice.net/files/incineration/BurnBabyBurn.pdf>

YouTube of it is here: <https://www.youtube.com/@EnergyJustice> (see "Burn, Baby, Burn" video)

Burning garbage destroys human and environmental health, local economy and property values. In fact, their business plan, "put-or-pay", demands increased trash volume for their profits. **See Better Trash Options** Reducing trash volumes can be done – Los Angeles reduced its trash volume by over 60%.

**WHAT TO DO?** - Be informed, learn about options and implications, and contact county legislators before they decide!. We must demand that our legislators make the decision that protects the health and welfare of all.- **NO INCINERATOR!** To send your comments to the County legislators by emailing the clerk to the legislature, [AnnMarie.Martin@sullivanny.gov](mailto:AnnMarie.Martin@sullivanny.gov)

**Sullivan County Final RFP** --see paragraph #4

<https://bit.ly/3Ouij2u>

**Reworld response to Sullivan's Final RFP includes 'Put or Pay' language**

<https://bit.ly/3Qch5JV>

**This document by: Damascus Citizens for Sustainability** (search for 'incinerator' on [DamascusCitizens.org](http://DamascusCitizens.org)) and look also at **Better Trash Options**.