



California judge denies petition to stop \$120M Waste Management facility

Dive Brief:

A judge in California's Alameda County Superior Court has denied a legal petition by two Bay Area recycling advocates, seeking to halt a \$120 million mixed waste facility proposed by Waste Management. As reported by Resource Recycling, the 62,000-square-foot project would be located next to the company's transfer station in San Leandro.

The facility is intended to build upon and enhance the operations of the existing facility, which processes waste for the city of Oakland. The petition, filed by Arthur Boone and Antoinette W. Stein, argued that residents will be less attentive to separating their recyclables if they know the facility will do it for them. The petitioners also argued the approval of the facility was inconsistent with state law and posed air pollution risks.

According to project documents, Waste Management intends to achieve a 61% diversion rate by using automated equipment to separate out organic materials and recyclables. The facility will include both an anaerobic digester and an in-vessel composting system to process the recovered organics.

Dive Insight:

Waste Management expects to initially take 150,000 tons per year from Oakland, resulting in the recovery of 60,000 tons of organics and 31,000 tons of recyclable commodities. This operation could eventually ramp up to 300,000 tons per year and process material from additional sources.

Unless an appeal is filed, Waste Management is free to move forward with the project.

Because of California's high legislative targets for recovering organics and other recyclable commodities, various forms of mixed waste processing facilities have already gained more traction in the state than elsewhere. Now that China's import restrictions have hit West Coast markets particularly hard, that interest could rise.

The situation is so significant that state lawmakers are considering a bill to change language around compliance with California's recycling objectives. In a May letter, CalRecycle Director Scott Smithline wrote that the state needs to expand infrastructure to become more self-sufficient. Though he also said that this expansion will take years, especially for organics, and described the task as "daunting."

Elsewhere in the country, various types of mixed waste projects are also moving forward.

In Maine, Fiberright is constructing a 144,000-square-foot facility that is billed as being a more sustainable and affordable option for municipalities in the region than an existing waste-to-energy facility. The project is also designed to be more adaptable to future market trends. In South Carolina, RePower is also working on a MRF equipped with advanced technology. The company was recently selected to reopen another mixed waste facility in Montgomery, Alabama.