

# Onondaga and Cortland Counties Announce Joint Environmental Review Effort to Advance Regional Solid Waste Partnership

*Counties agree to pursue co-lead agency status for environmental review and announce 30-day public comment period*

SYRACUSE, N.Y., — (March 24, 2014) An agreement in principle executed last August between Onondaga and Cortland Counties, to cooperate in an environmentally beneficial and cost effective regional solid waste partnership, is taking its first major step forward today as the two counties announce they will be working together as Co-Lead Agencies for the State Environmental Quality Review (SEQR) process.

Lead agencies are responsible for coordinating a project's environmental review. The decision to provide for Co-Lead Agency status will allow for a more comprehensive review process and ensure that all parties and all residents have an opportunity to evaluate the project.

Cortland County who has already begun the initial stages of the SEQR process is working collaboratively with Onondaga County on the SEQR effort. An ongoing public comment period on the scope of the project will continue and be amended to include review of additional Onondaga County impacts.

Consultants for the two counties are in the process of developing a revised scoping document, which will be released soon. All comments received to date on the current scope of the project will be valid and included as the two counties move forward.

The initial phase of the SEQR process involves review of a draft scoping document that outlines topics for future study.

After public comment on the scoping document is received, the final project scope is developed. This scope is the basis for development of the draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) that explores environmental impacts in detail. The community will also have a chance to provide feedback on the DEIS.

Residents of both communities will have multiple opportunities to weigh in on the proposed regional solid waste partnership.

While municipal partnership have been encouraged by New York State for many years, the announcement made today is the first of its kind in upstate New York, in which two counties will share leadership responsibilities for the potential implementation of a regional, mutually beneficial program.

"I'm pleased to join with Onondaga County for the environmental review of our proposed regional partnership," said Cortland County Legislature Chair Susan Briggs. "Sharing Lead Agency status will allow our two counties to take this step together. The

environment, as well as the residents of both counties, will be better served by such a cooperative effort.”

Currently, Cortland County disposes of municipal solid waste, or trash, at its county-owned landfill, while Onondaga County trash is processed at the OCRRA Waste-to-Energy (WTE) Facility, where additional metals are removed for recycling and the remaining trash is turned into electricity. The proposed partnership would send Cortland County’s trash to be processed at the WTE Facility, thus increasing energy production and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. In exchange, the non-hazardous ash byproduct will be sent to the Cortland County landfill, further reducing greenhouse gas emissions, transportation costs and fuel usage.

OCRRA Board Chairman Michael Reilly said, “This innovative partnership with Cortland County will reduce overall greenhouse gas emissions by the equivalent of removing 17,300 cars from the road each year, and it will help OCRRA continue to fund the award-winning green services it offers Onondaga County.”