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New York's Waste/Recycling Leaders Head West to See the Future

Friday, June 9, 2017 – (Brooklyn, NY) – What's the MRF (materials recovery facility) of the future? What materials will it handle, and what technologies will sort and process them? Those are the questions that ten representatives of waste and recycling service companies from New York City will be exploring on a three-day field trip to California planned for June 14-16.

"The east and west coasts of the U.S. have different waste management practices," said Kendall Christiansen, executive director of New Yorkers for Responsible Waste Management (NYRWM), which organized the trip. "Public policies are the primary driver of west coast recycling and diversion systems, while east coast waste companies are also driven to recycle by high disposal costs - but must deal with the high costs, complex regulatory systems, and severe NIMBYism."

"West coast MRFs are a generation ahead of most on the east coast," said Jeff Draper, Senior Vice President of Zero Waste Energy (ZWE), a subsidiary of Bulk Handling Systems (BHS), which is assisting with the tour, "and so we are pleased to welcome New Yorkers to some of our facilities."

On the tour of seven facilities in five cities, NYC's waste leaders will see the latest in processing technologies – including mixed-waste MRFs with advanced sorting systems, high-solids organics facilities producing renewable natural gas for vehicle fuel, and a robot on a waste processing conveyor.

"NYC's commitment to pursue zero waste to landfills by 2030 means taking a serious look at next-generation facilities, accelerating use of technology, and even processing mixed waste to recover recyclable materials, divert organics and generate energy from what remains," said Norman Steisel, a former First Deputy Mayor and Commissioner of the Department of Sanitation.

"We look forward to meeting with our industry colleagues in both Los Angeles and the Bay Area; we'll kick the tires on innovative waste processing systems, and bring new ideas back to New York – including how to process more materials on smaller footprints," added Ben Velocci of Avid Environmental Services, President of NYRWM.

NYRWM's member companies are engaged in all aspects of collecting, processing and managing solid waste, recyclables, organics and other materials generated by New York City's commercial, institutional and industrial sectors; they also process and manage some of what is collected by the Department of Sanitation (DSNY). Organized in 2016, the primary focus of NYRWM is to address the city's proposed plan to restructure the commercial waste industry into zones to be serviced by a single company. Most of the companies are locally-owned - many of them family-owned small businesses spanning generations.