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News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Waste Characterization Studies Look at the Big Picture

ORLANDO, FLA. – May 1, 2002 – For decades, solid waste planners have relied on waste characterization studies to assess what was being disposed, what could be recovered and how effective diversion and recovery programs were. The problem with this approach is that waste characterization studies are expensive and many small jurisdictions cannot afford to conduct studies.

R. W. Beck, Inc., a management consulting and engineering firm, has developed a large-scale waste characterization study approach that provides small communities with the data they need at a greatly reduced cost. The premise of the approach, which combines extensive data collection with statistical analysis, revolves around assessing and comparing waste streams within large geographical areas, then extrapolating that data using a web-based computer model to come up with waste characterization data that are transferable to municipalities throughout the area.

“The goal is to give solid waste planners the data they need, at a cost they can afford so they can make better decisions,” says Tom Jones, project manager for R. W. Beck’s Infrastructure Services Group in Boston, “No jurisdiction can know what to divert from its waste stream until it knows what’s in its waste stream”.

R. W. Beck, Inc. has several prominent, large-scale waste characterization studies underway or recently completed, including studies for the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection and Florida Department of Environmental Protection.

When Pennsylvania recently increased its mandatory diversion requirements, the State’s solid waste officials were looking for innovative approaches to achieve the mandated increase. R. W. Beck is helping the Pennsylvania DEP characterize components in the state’s waste stream and evaluate future diversion efforts by sorting and analyzing waste at a dozen waste transfer and disposal facilities around the State. With a population of 12 million people, Pennsylvania will ultimately target more than 1,000 physically sorted residential and commercial samples.

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The Florida statewide study focuses primarily on data collected from 12 counties on 31 materials. The study, conducted over two seasons, will produce data that are transferable to all 67 of Florida's counties, as well as cities.

The key factor in both of these studies was the use of R. W. Beck's proprietary web-based computer model that allows complete flexibility and scalability in analyzing and aggregating subsets of waste composition data. The model will allow the data from both of the large-scale studies to have transferability to neighboring municipalities who might not otherwise have access to such data.

"The great thing about this approach," says R. W. Beck's Jones, "is that data transferability drills down to district, township, borough, and even village level."

R. W. Beck has performed a majority of the major waste characterization studies in the United States over the past decade including statewide characterization studies for Minnesota, Iowa, Pennsylvania, and Florida, and a recently kicked-off statewide characterization study for Georgia. Other projects include Alameda County, CA (Oakland); Montgomery County, MD; and Wake County, NC (Raleigh).

Founded in 1942, R W. Beck is a management consulting and engineering firm that provides services to the public and private sectors in the areas of solid waste, ,water resources, energy, and telecommunications. As national leaders in the field of solid waste management, the firm conducted more than 30 large-scale solid waste characterization studies across the United States.

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