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## Recycling issue remains unresolved

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Editor Letters

Garden

Point Recycling and Refuse owner Arthur Wilkowski continues to pepper regulators with letters and filings in an attempt to get them to support what he feels the community needs in a garbage system.

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“Basically I’m putting the firecracker in the anthill,” Wilkowski said.

In a cluster of filings submitted to the Whatcom Utilities and Transportation Commission (WUTC) on May 23, Wilkowski is asking the state regulatory agency to change his company’s tariff to remove the curbside recycling program, which he suspended in January.

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Wilkowski is arguing the program has always had too small a customer base to be economically viable, and has seen no customer growth in eight years. “I have repeatedly asked the county and commission staff to evaluate the cost feasibility and need of this program,” he wrote. The current free self-haul program, open to all community members and not only those on the garbage service, better serves Point Roberts needs and helps insure fewer recyclables end up in landfills and ditches, he said.

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“It’s not my job to prove this system doesn’t work,” Wilkowski said. “It’s their job to design and evaluate a cost-effective, reasonable plan for this area.”

Wilkowski said currently only 17 percent of households use the regular garbage pickup service, another 10 percent use the tag system for occasional collection, and ten percent use the transfer station to self-haul their garbage. “Less than 50 percent of households use the system,” he said. His solution is to mandate service for all households, ensuring greater participation in the system his company operates, which he describes as a “solid-waste co-op.”

Wilkowski is also asking for a definition to be added to his tariff that would specifically classify any material that may be used to make

“alternative daily landfill cover” as disposal, not recycling. Wilkowski is claiming that “sham” recyclers are removing construction waste from Point Roberts, which ends up being ground up to cap the Vancouver landfill.

“My case is it’s garbage and it’s going to a landfill. It doesn’t matter if you grind it up,” Wilkowski said. When companies compete with the local garbage system by removing solid waste from the waste stream, it drives up rates for other users of the system, Wilkowski argues.

WUTC representative Marilyn Meehan said the two filings would be reviewed by the commission on June 26, and consumers are encouraged to comment on one or both of the filings at [consumer@utc.wa.gov](mailto:consumer@utc.wa.gov), or to call 360/664-1208 to find out how else they can get their input before the commission.

Wilkowski had been scheduled for a hearing at the end of April on whether the company should lose its solid waste collection permit for failing to file annual reports and pay certain fees. Meehan confirmed that those reports and fees have been filed, and the WUTC considers that issue resolved.

The county, however, has requested a hearing before the WUTC to address Point Recycling and Refuse’s discontinuance of the curbside recycling program, which is mandatory under the county’s solid waste plan.

Penny Lemperes, solid waste specialist with the county, said they had not yet received a date for the hearing from WUTC staff. “We can’t make the wheels turn any faster,” she said. “It’s hard to get all the powers that be together to address this but we’re trying.”

Lemperes acknowledged Wilkowski’s argument that the system needed a tune up. “It hasn’t worked well,” she said. “We don’t want to put a band aid on it. We need to fix the system and find the best cost-effective solution for the citizens of Point Roberts.”