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Recycling pickup service dropped

By Cameron Ellis

Point Roberts has a new recycling system, if the local garbage hauler has anything to say about it. Others aren't so sure.

Since the end of January, Art Wilkowski, owner of Point Recycling & Refuse, has stopped curbside collection of recycling in favor of a self-haul program in which residents bring their recycling to the transfer station on Johnson Road free of charge.

The engine in the company's lone recycling truck suffered a catastrophic failure and is too expensive to repair, according to Wilkowski. This setback has given Wil-kowski the opportunity to introduce the drop-off system, something he's wanted to do for quite some time. Last year he approached the county to request permission to drop the service.

"Everyone's taken care of through this program," said Wilkowski, noting he believes most of his recycling customers are utilizing the self-haul system.

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Wilkowski has no desire to return to the previous system. "It's not economically feasible, given the current rates and customer base. I don't think it's what's best for the customer," he said. Repairs to the recycling truck would cost 60 percent of the service's annual revenue, and user rates would subsequently rise. Wilkowski says a used recycling truck would cost well over \$50,000 which is out of reach given the revenues from the recycling program.

The Whatcom County Solid Waste Division has taken exception to the new process. The county issued a news release stating Wilkowski has 60 days from February 11 to comply with county regulations that require solid waste carriers to provide a curbside program for recycling.

It remains unclear what will happen after 60 days, but it is clear that the county is not happy with the current state of affairs.

"One of two things is going to happen; we can hire someone else to manage it [recycling], or the county council will make a decision. The county council hasn't said anything yet," said Penni Lemperes of the Whatcom County Public Works Solid Waste Division.

(Cameron Ellis, a Blaine high school senior and local resident, is interning this spring at the All Point Bulletin.)