

CONSTRUCTION & DEMOLITION RECYCLING®



FAMILY TIES

E.L. Harvey & Sons builds on a 50-year commitment to New England's recycling industry with the addition of a C&D recycling operation.

The Harvey family business has taken many forms over the years, but from dairy farming to landfill to waste hauler and recycler, the one constant in the Harvey family business has always been the Harvey family. Eight family members representing three generations make for a strong family presence in the company today. “We are a very hands-on family operation,” says co-owner Ben Harvey.

The Harveys have ties to recycling in the Westborough, Mass.-area going back some 50 years, and the family’s roots in the town go back nearly twice as far. The current company structure can be divided into four branches: Harvey’s waste collection and hauling service, a commercial “dirty” MRF, a high-grade paper sorting and collection operation, and now the C&D processing facility, which came online in 2007.

“The growth has been mostly organic,” says Ben. The company in its current incarnation started up in 1971 focusing mainly on the waste hauling service, he says. From there, the company has grown from a modest staff of four to some 200 employees.

The company has actually been recycling C&D materials since the mid-1990s, according to Ben. When the state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) outright banned the disposal of construction and demolition debris in Massachusetts’ landfills, E.L. Harvey saw a chance to grow its business yet again by helping its customers comply with the new regulations.

“We’re familiar with the waste bans, and what our company does is help bring the customer into compliance and make it easy and convenient for them to do that,” says Ben’s cousin and fellow company co-owner Doug Harvey. “That’s one unique aspect of our company.”

SORTING IT OUT

The C&D system is processing between 250 and 300 tons of material per day, most of which comes from the commercial side of the industry, although the company does accept material from smaller residential jobs. “If you remodel a bathroom, we’ll supply Dumpsters for that—all the way to supplying 30-yard containers for million-dollar buildings,” says Doug. “That’s the kind of scope we have.”

E.L. Harvey’s sorting operation, designed by Wal-tec, a Netherlands-based company, is housed in a 55,000-square-foot building. When setting the system up, the Harveys closely examined their target markets to help them determine the specific equipment they needed.

“One of the first things you need to decide is: Are you going to shred or grind your material or not,” asks Doug. “As a family, our company decided specifically not to grind. That was a very conscious decision and really makes a difference how this equipment is set up.”

Ben says that the markets E.L. Harvey wanted to serve with its C&D operation are better supplied with

larger pieces of material. “We need to have our pieces whole so we can do a positive pick,” Ben says. “We’ve seen companies size material through a grinder because they’re making ADC or a fines product, [but] we knew the market in the Northeast was limited on the marketing of that material, so we did not want to put all our eggs in that basket. We wanted to have bigger pieces that we could physically remove from the sorting line.”

Mixed C&D material enters the facility and travels up a conveyor where it is fed into the first trommel and it is split in two, says Doug. “The first half [of the trommel] has 1-inch holes in it all the way around, and all the dirt and anything smaller than that falls directly down into a bunker,” he describes. Material then enters a second part of the trommel that sorts out anything less than 12 inches in size.





A Harvey employee at a picking station.

Material larger than 12 inches continues on to the main picking stations, where sorters positive sort A and B wood, OCC, scrap metal and plastics.

Smaller material is further sorted by an air system and then a water bath on its way to the sorting stations.

The system is designed with multiple conveyors to allow more pickers, Doug says.

"It actually gives one, two, three or four sorters the ability to pick more than one material," Ben describes. "They can pick their primary material, which is the bunker they stand next to, or they can pick the secondary material. It depends on which side of the belt they're standing on, but it gives us the versatility and better utilization of our personnel."

Designing the system required the Harveys to take a close look both at what material made up their infeed and what end markets they wanted to sell to. "It was a combination of moving forward and moving back and meeting in the middle with the right equipment to get the job done," says Ben. "There was no sense in putting in a grinder that made a 6-inch minus product day in and day out [if] the only thing that would work for is

Approval Rating

The new C&D processing facility at E.L. Harvey & Sons was constructed with some help from a grant from MassDevelopment.

The praise and helping hand from the state level for the C&D facility is a sharp contrast to the current legal fight to get Harvey's other expansion project off the ground. The company purchased land in the neighboring town of Hopkinton, Mass., to expand the current facility and has been stuck in a cycle of the permitting process for more than six years.

Compared to the four months it took to permit the C&D facility, the difference is pronounced, says Ben. "The state was behind us to do what we needed to do," he says. "Where we ran into the boondoggle was dealing with the local boards. So \$3 million and six years later, and we haven't put a shovel in the ground, and nine months and \$5 million later and we've got a state-of-the-art C&D recycling facility."

Ben likens the situation to a football game made up of many little victories and defeats, moving forward and then getting pushed back. The company has been operating in the area for more than 50 years and has always strived to be good neighbors, Ben says, making the fight all the more frustrating. "Everybody wants it somewhere else," he says.

When confronted with that kind of NIMBY-ism, Ben says it's important to meet community resistance with openness and candor by keeping the community informed and even letting neighbors tour the facility. "We've tried to do things correctly; that's how we've always conducted our business," Ben says.



E.L. Harvey uses a water bath as part of its sorting process.

ADC, and then to have that market go away.”

End markets figured prominently in how the Harveys approached recycling C&D material, and Ben says availability of those end markets, particularly those for wood, is the most pertinent issue facing the C&D recycling industry as a whole.

MAINTAINING MARKETS

For the C&D recycling industry, particularly in New England, the cultivation of reliable end markets for C&D wood other than mulch is of chief importance, according to Ben.

“What I feel is going to be one of the toughest hurdles to get over is getting the approval to use C&D wood as a biofuel,” he says.

The New Hampshire state legislature approved a ban on the use of C&D wood as a fuel source in wood burning energy plants in the summer of 2007 that took effect Jan. 1, 2008, and Harvey and others fear that where New Hampshire goes, the rest of the New England will follow.

“Right now, we’ve got a viable wood market, and we think it’s going to be viable for awhile,” Ben says. “But those regulations are out of our control. All we can do is make a product that meets the specifications that we need today.”

Ben says that while there are currently no biofuel burners in the state of Massachusetts, a few have been proposed. With proper controls, Ben says plants should be able to burn C&D wood with the same emissions as solid waste combustors. “If you put controls on the stacks going out, you should be able to burn this wood as a viable fuel,” he says. With oil prices at historic highs, it makes good sense as alternative energy, he adds.

“We keep talking in this country about getting away

from dependency on foreign oil,” says Doug. “We need to stop just talking about that and start doing something about it. We feel this country needs to be looking at those wood markets as viable fuel.”

Approximately 35 percent of the C&D material stream is comprised of wood, making end market cultivation all the more critical, according to both Ben and Doug. “To make it work, we need outlets,” Ben says.

However, no matter what challenges the company faces with markets, a commitment to recycling has kept E.L. Harvey successful for more than three decades, and the company will continue that commitment, says Doug. “Recycling is what our company is about,” he says. “It’s certainly a philosophy of ours.”

And it’s been that way since Ben and Doug’s childhood, when the family business was dairy cows, not hauling solid waste and recycling. “We always recycled,” Ben recalls. “As kids, I remember collecting newspaper to get a couple of extra bucks—that was our spending money.”

The Harveys have institutionalized that commitment to recycling and now it generates more than just pocket change—both in revenue for a successful company and as a valuable service for its customers.

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A trommel screen is the first step in the E.L. Harvey system.

