For those who know Daphne Harley well, embracing change is as natural as taking a breath. Since taking over the reigns of the Waste Management Department (WMD), this dynamic leader has encouraged flexibility, innovation and consistency. These traits have served her well in the often changing environment of trash.

"From the moment I became the Director of Waste Management, I not only encouraged my staff to accept change but to embrace it. That mantra has led to creative problem solving of some of the industry's toughest problems."

In 1992, following the passage of Assembly Bill 939, Ms. Harley was hired in the Director's position of the newly formed, stand-alone department. Prior to that, solid waste was under Public Works.

Change was an inherent component of AB 939. The bill set State-wide recycling mandates and established requirements for the design, construction and operation of waste collection facilities.

"AB 939 changed the way we looked at waste. The bill promised to assess $10,000 a day fines for non-compliance of 25% and 50% recycling mandates." To accomplish those goals, the Waste Management Department was formed.

Today the County is at a 62% waste diversion rate, and achieves a compliance rate of 99.5% with regard to all State laws for design, construction and operation. Both goals were reached as a result of change.

The department tackled recycling goals with the implementation of a gate fee system, enhanced recycling programs, and consistent public education.

"It was important to develop a comprehensive waste management strategy that put an emphasis on programs without minimizing service standards. Prior to the early 1990's recycling was just an idea, it was our job to make recycling a reality," said Harley.

Early efforts focused on green waste - a large segment of the residential waste stream. Partnering with the city of Bakersfield enabled the County to cost-effectively divert grass, brush and tree trimmings from the landfill. Community Recycling Centers and voluntary curbside recycling programs followed for residents in metro Bakersfield.

Staff also tackled the heavy task of diverting construction and demolition waste. "We worked with local waste haulers to develop a successful construction waste recycling program. To that end, Metropolitan Recycling recycles thousands of tons of construction material each year."

The implementation of a landfill gate fee for commercial businesses and certain residential materials has encouraged people to examine what they throw away. "We continue to make recycling options more convenient and affordable," continued Daphne.

"It's important to recognize that we are not just managing trash but rather, we are managing society's behavior when it comes to trash. I believe, in the long run, that changing the way people think and act is a change for the better."
Approaching the last few days in the Director's chair, Director Harley reflects on the last sixteen years...

"From the first day on the job, I recognized the importance of transparency in government. Back then, we discovered that soil found in closed burn dumps contained high levels of lead. Children were playing in the soil and being exposed. Parents were angry and confused. From that moment on, I knew we needed to communicate the facts - always. Our job is to serve the public. Those were difficult times but the experience shaped the department and is a valuable part of who I am today."

"I knew if I was going to be successful, I needed capable people able to make good decisions consistent with the goals of the department as well as the Board (of Supervisors). I look around and see managers and supervisors able to do just that."

"The waste management industry is riddled with challenges, but I love a good challenge. I drive myself harder and hold myself to a higher standard than anyone else could."

"My challenge has been to encourage individuality while, at the same time, develop team players."

"I keep a paper cup on my desk to remind me that I am like a paper cup. I serve a useful purpose but I am disposable. With that in mind, I try to be the best paper cup I possibly can."

"I want my staff to tell me the good news as well as the bad. I've always done the same for them ... ask any staff member, I'm sure they'll tell you a story or two."

"We plan in ten-year horizons. All aspects of the department are reviewed equally: financial, operational, developmental, environmental, educational. That way, there are no big surprises."

Early on, I remember attending meetings and feeling almost invisible. This only encouraged me to try harder, work longer and give voice to my ideas every step of the way. Eventually, I became a visible force in an often male-dominated world.

"If I leave behind a legacy. I would hope that it is about building and preserving relationships both inside and outside the county. By doing so, you're able to accomplish much more than you can alone. It's also helpful when problems spring up. People are much more apt to pick up the phone and call you if they know and trust you."

"Most of all, I'll miss the people. Together we have shaped the future of trash ... one project at a time."
Innovation In Action

Under Daphne's leadership, Waste Management staff have developed innovative solutions to the challenges of waste recycling and disposal. From Alternative Daily Cover to Used Motor Oil Recycling, Waste Management teams have tackled problems with an eye toward innovation. This approach delivers ideas that have become industry standards!

**Alternative Daily Cover:** the ADC program now uses football field-sized tarps to cover trash at landfills. The reusable tarps are rolled across the waste at the close of each day and rolled up every morning.

**Landfill Buffer Zones:** WMD has successfully negotiated agreements to use land surrounding active and closed landfills for mutually beneficial purposes. From soccer parks to almond groves, model airplane flying fields to radio stations; land uses are as innovative as the people behind them.

**Used Motor Oil Program** - WMD partnered with the NASCAR Racing Industry to promote used motor oil recycling. The partnership influenced commercial and home motor oil changers to recycle as well.

**Landfill Gas Extraction System:** These underground integrated systems extract landfill gas in both active and closed landfills, funneling it to a flare where the gas burns off. The effort combats gaseous groundwater contamination.

**Landfill Operator Incentives:** To encourage Landfill Contract Operators to compact trash as tightly as possible, WMD offers financial incentives. The effort preserves landfill space and saves money for all county taxpayers.

**Gas to Energy Project:** New this year: A renewable energy project at the Bena Landfill which will convert landfill gas to green energy - enough to fuel 3000 Bakersfield homes.

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**DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS**

*Parting Words from the Director -*

As I take my final curtain call as Director of this fantastic department, I leave with mixed emotions. I feel a combination of sadness, pride, delight, excitement and anticipation.

My sadness results from the realization that I will no longer be in the daily company of some of the most wonderful and talented people I’ve ever worked with. I can honestly say that the employees of the Waste Management Department are a true asset to the county family, dedicated to doing the best job possible. My colleagues, outside of the department, are also fantastic. I will miss everyone so much!

I am proud of the many accomplishments, awards and advancements our department is responsible for. Over the past 16 years, we have received awards for innovation and service from national organizations such as the John F. Kennedy School of Government, and the National Association of Counties; state organizations such as the California Association of Counties; and local organizations such as Kern Cog, the Board of Supervisors and The Bakersfield Chamber of Commerce.

Who would not be proud to be a part of such a wonderful team?

Delight best describes how I feel about the opportunity to learn how to do something I’ve not done very well in the past, and that is RELAX! The prospect of not HAVING to do something unless I choose to, sounds

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delightful. I also intend on doing a lot of traveling, especially this year. I have at least six trips planned, and I just got back from one!!

I am excited about being able to spend more time back home in the U.S. Virgin Islands and reconnecting with family and friends. I am blessed that my mom is still alive, and I hope to spend more time with her. After living abroad for the past 38 years, 34 of them here in Bakersfield, I have learned to appreciate the beauty of my island home. I am truly excited about having the opportunity to spend more time there.

A child-like anticipation has surfaced as I am about to begin this new chapter in my life. I am resisting the urge to prepare a 10-year plan for my future, and instead wait to see what opportunities and experiences lay ahead.

As I write this, I am smiling. That tells me that I’ve made the right decision. It’s time to turn over the reins. I do this without hesitation or reservation. The department has great leadership in place, and I know they will continue to soar to even greater heights!

~ With much Love and Respect

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