

# MRF of the Month

## Far West Fibers, Inc. Hillsboro Recycling Center

Situated off the Tualatin Valley Highway, on a 5.5-acre plot located in Portland's high-technology suburb of Hillsboro, Oregon, sits one of the Beaver State's largest MRFs for commingled recyclables.



The 64,000-square-foot Hillsboro Recycling Center is owned and operated by the Far West Fibers Group, who run three major sorting facilities, four public drop-off depots and a small transfer facility, all in the Portland metro area alone. Outside of Oregon, the company also operates plants in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho; Hilo, Hawaii; and Spokane, Washington.

The MRF processes single-stream material (glass is collected separately on the side) on behalf of more than 175,000 households throughout the tri-county region (Marion, Multnomah and Washington counties), as well as the commercial sector. The facility also has drop-off for a myriad of hard-to-recycle items, including: plastic bags, film and wrap; media plastic; cooking oil; electronics recognized under the state's E-Cycles recovery program (all devices can be disposed of free-of-charge); white goods; clean foot wear;

rechargeable batteries; and microwaves. Further, Far West recently dove into its newest venture: used carpet recycling (including polyurethane-based carpet pad). According to Keith Ristau, Far West Fibers' president, the program just began, but Far West expects to eventually process around 1,000 tons per month of used carpet.

The Hillsboro Recycling Center's lone complete residential curbside sorting installation consists of four different sizing screens, five sorting conveyors, and mechanical ferrous metal removal, and can handle as much as 330 tons per day. The MRF's processing system utilizes Krause Manufacturing conveyors; Lubo USA screens for fiber; a CP Manufacturing "V"-screen; balers manufactured by Enterprise Baler Corp. and the Harris Waste Management Group; and Walker Magnetics and Dings CO Magnetic Group magnetic separation equipment.

In 2009, the Hillsboro Recycling Center processed approximately 85,000 tons of material, with fiber making up 76 percent (65,000 tons) of that volume and commingled containers accounting for the rest.

Presently, the plant is producing an average residue rate of between 4.5 and five percent, and Ristau states that film plastic, plastic bags, and other non-program contamination, which binds up and wraps around sorting screen shafts and discs, are the biggest challenges currently being faced at the recycling center. "Unfortunately, such products as garden hoses, clothing, strings of holiday lights collected before and after Christmas, etc., cause us to send employees – at every break and lunch hour of each shift – into the screens and remove these types of items."

Notable "green" features of the Far West Fibers facility includes the use of low-energy lighting, with photo electronic cells, throughout the plant and the installation of a rainwater containment bio-swale to capture storm water runoff.

The Hillsboro Recycling Center has a full-time staff of 80 (including office staff and management), all of whom work under two processing shifts, five days per week. And, according to Ristau, of their full-time staff, 50 percent are employed through temporary agencies.

\*Know of a North American MRF that you feel *Resource Recycling* readers should know about? If so, e-mail your recommendation, with high-resolution pictures, to [justin@resource-recycling.com](mailto:justin@resource-recycling.com), and your facility may just be highlighted in a future "MRF of the Month" column.



### Technical Specifications\*

Far West Fibers, Inc.  
Hillsboro Recycling Center

**Location:**

Hillsboro, Oregon

**Start-up date:**

November 1999, with equipment retrofits taking place in 2003 and 2006

**Number of processing lines:**

One

**Throughput:**

330 tons per day

**Approximate tons of material processed (2009):**

85,000 tons

Fiber: 65,000

Commingled containers:  
25,000

**Residue rate:**

Between 4.5 and five percent

### 2007-2008 Materials Processing and Recycling in the United States: Yearbook and Directory

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#### Governmental Advisory Associates, Inc.

203.226.3238 • 203.226.3239 (fax) • [gaa@governmentaladvisory.com](mailto:gaa@governmentaladvisory.com) • [www.governmentaladvisory.com](http://www.governmentaladvisory.com)

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