



To: Board of County Commissioners
From: Ray Rears, County Manager
CC: John Combs, Public Works Director
Date: January 27, 2026
Subject: Gilpin County Solid Waste / Free Trash Day Program

Background

The Gilpin County Free Trash Program provides residents with one free disposal visit per year at the Trash Transfer Station. Last and previous years the maximum disposed as part of this free program was 5 cubic yards. The program was intended to support neighborhood cleanup, provide equitable waste services for residents and help protect the environment.

This program is in addition to the year-round free slash disposal available to all residents without fees.

As part of the 2026 budget process, the Board authorized a change in the token value from 5 to 2 cubic yards. Below is a table showing the expected loss of revenue (if the resident had been charged by the cubic yard rather than using a free trash day). The table after that shows Solid Waste budgeted revenue and expense.

| | Tokens | Cubic Yards Collected | Average Collected per token | Potential Fee collected per CY | Loss in Revenue |
|-------------|--------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------|
| 2025 | 861 | 3,531 | 4.1 | \$40 | \$141,240 |
| 2026 (est.) | 861 | 1,722 | 2 | \$40 | \$ 68,880 |
| Difference | | | | | \$ 72,360 |

| 2026 Solid Waste Revenue | Amount |
|---|------------------|
| Property Tax | \$155,761 |
| Vehicle Ownership Tax | \$ 15,000 |
| Taxes Subtotal | \$170,761 |
| Trash Fees | \$329,350 |
| Recycling Fees | \$ 18,000 |
| Slash Fees (non-resident) | \$ 500 |
| Fees Subtotal | \$347,850 |
| Taxes + Fees | \$518,611 |
| Total Expenses | \$635,025 |
| Deficit (offset by General Fund Transfer) | \$116,414 |

Other relevant facts:

- The average homeowner pays approximately \$10 in property tax annually to support the Solid Waste Fund / program.
- Approximately 25% of the 3,455 homes in Gilpin County utilize the program.
- 861 homeowners benefit from the program at a value of an estimated \$164 per token/home.
- Costs associated with the operation include landfill fees, Truck hauling costs, loader to fill container costs, equipment, repair, maintenance & staffing costs which justify the \$40 per cubic yard fee. These costs are not fully offset by the revenue received, partially due to the free trash day program, which is why a funds transfer is made each year from the general fund to support the operation.

Regional Comparison

Neighboring counties (Jefferson, Clear Creek, and Boulder) do not offer free trash disposal.

- Gilpin also offers free slash disposal for residents
- Gilpin trash fees are comparable to Nederland and lower than Clear Creek

Key Elements

- Program remains a resident benefit not offered by surrounding counties
- Reduction maintains access while cutting costs roughly in half
- Improves long-term sustainability of the Solid Waste Fund and Trash Transfer Operation
- Balances service delivery with fiscal responsibility, though the program remains not financially self-sustaining without additional support from the general fund.
- One of the few enterprises in the County which could become fully self-sustaining (run business like)
- Increased awareness may lead to higher participation rates and higher costs, even with the lower free volume limit