

# Facility Spotlight: New River Regional Landfill

Carol Sawyer, Jones Edmunds

*The SWANA Florida Sunshine Chapter Landfill Management Technical Division Committee presents the first Facility Spotlight column. This column will feature Sunshine Chapter facilities and members while discussing issues and challenges with planning, designing, constructing, operating and closing landfills.*

## Background and History

The New River Solid Waste Association (NRSWA) has operated the New River Regional Landfill (NRRL) since July 1992. It is a publicly-owned facility and the first regional landfill in Florida. The NRSWA consists of Baker, Bradford, and Union Counties and also accepts solid waste from Alachua, Levy, and Gilchrist Counties.

## Location

NRRL is 2.5 miles north of Raiford, Florida, east of SR 121.

## About the Facility

The facility encompasses ±500 acres in Union County, Florida. Phase I consists of 98 acres permitted for Class I disposal with capacity through 2028. Phase II consists of ±200 acres that is available for future disposal and borrow activities. The facility averages about 1,000 tons per day and is negotiating a high-BTU gas-to-energy contract. NRSWA has worked with the University of Florida on several innovative projects and received SWANA's Gold Excellence Award for landfill management.

## Q&A with Perry Kent, NRSWA Executive Director

*Perry Kent has made a career at the NRRL. The married father of two has worked at NRRL 26 years, first as a heavy equipment operator and then as the Assistant Director. He took the role as Executive Director in May 2018.*

**Q:** How has life at NRRL changed from when it opened in 1992?

**A:** When I began working here as an operator, we were accepting about 100 tons per day total between Class I and Class III waste just from our member counties. I was working in non-air conditioned equipment in a 7-acre cell. Today, we handle on average 1,000 tons per day of Class I waste

conversion project. The final product will be pipeline-quality fuel directly injected into the local pipeline. This will be a great beneficial reuse project for our facility and for the State.

**Q:** What project or feature at NRRL are you most proud of?

**A:** I am most proud of how progressive we are. We embrace new approaches and technology. We are proud of our positive impact on the solid waste industry through research and innovative designs. We have leadership and staff longevity; we are committed to operating a safe and reliable facility in our community.

**Q:** What is your biggest challenge?

**A:** Honestly, in Florida—weather. This impacts everything, and you have to be flexible and plan ahead. Regardless of the weather, you always have to think ahead of how to best take

care of your customers, staff and the environment.

**Q:** What is the worst smell you can ever remember coming from the dump or a bag of garbage?

**A:** Years ago, a chicken farmer would bring containers of dead chickens that he had stockpiled for a few days. The smell from those containers as he emptied them was unbelievable.

**Q:** What does a landfill guy do for fun outside of work?

**A:** I really enjoy working on cars and hot rods. I will tinker with most things.

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from six counties, manage an 82-acre Class I landfill, and are getting ready to install our first section of exposed geomembrane cover.

**Q:** What do you enjoy about working at a landfill?

**A:** No day is ever the same. Things change all the time, and there are always new problems to solve. There is rarely a boring day at work.

**Q:** NRSWA self-performs a lot of construction. How do you balance operations and construction?

**A:** This can be tough but you have to be flexible, have a plan, and have well trained and diverse staff. Even with a plan, things change all the time, and you have to have backup plans.

**Q:** Tell us about your upcoming landfill gas-to-energy project.

**A:** We are very excited about this project and are working with leaders in the field—Fortistar and Teco Peoples Gas. This will be a landfill-gas-to-compressed-natural-gas (CNG)