

City of Ansonia

Sustainable Materials Management Grant

Final Report

December 23, 2023

Summary of Pilot Program

The City of Ansonia applied for and received a Sustainable Materials Management Grant (SMM) from the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) for up to \$420,500 to pilot principles of unit-based pricing and organics diversion citywide. The contract (ID #2023-30) was executed on November 22, 2022. The Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments (NVCOG) entered into a separate contract with DEEP (ID #2023-180) to provide education and outreach services on behalf of Ansonia during the course of the grant.

The SMM pilot officially launched on December 5, 2022. Bags were distributed to participating households during the preceding weeks. During that time, contractor Waste Zero (WZ) realized that the original estimate of households provided by the former public works director was about 1,000 short. In order to address the shortfall, more boxes of bags were ordered and distributed immediately so that all Ansonia households (in buildings with less than five units) were able to participate, as was originally envisioned.

Given that the expense of extra bags was not accounted for in the grant budget, Ansonia, DEEP, and WZ agreed to “borrow” money from the end of the grant period, truncating what was supposed to be a 9-month pilot to a 7-month pilot. Ansonia followed up with a letter to DEEP dated 1/20/23 (Attachment A) requesting an additional \$45,385 to restore the program to its original 9 months. No reply was received.

During the grant period, NVCOG engaged in a number of outreach strategies. For several days leading up to the program launch, NVCOG and WZ staff tabled outside the Ansonia Stop & Shop with large poster and flyers to raise awareness about the program. The Trash Reduction Kickoff Fair took place on 1/21/23 at the Ansonia Public Library, where tabletop food scrap containers were handed out. Over 75 individuals attended. A smaller Community Champions Dinner was held 1/12/23, with participation from Mayor Cassetti, the Chair of the Board of Aldermen, and several members of the public. A “what’s in, what’s out” recycling workshop was held in partnership with RecycleCT on 1/24/23. Additionally, NVCOG maintained a Facebook presence at [@NVCOGReduceTheTrash](#), with regular informational and educational postings in Ansonia community groups (Attachment B). Phone calls from residents were answered throughout the entire grant period, with subject matters ranging from missed shipments to recycling questions to wondering where to get more bags. NVCOG was asked to pause outreach for Ansonia in spring of 2023.

The program officially concluded on July 5, 2023. Beyond submitting a letter of intent on 5/12/23, Ansonia did not engage in any permanence planning and does not intend to continue the program at this time.

Appendix A Elements

Below please find a chart outlining all Appendix A deliverables and whether they have been completed.

| Phase 1 | |
|--------------------|---------------------------|
| Deliverable | Completed |
| Pre-pilot planning | Yes (Meeting 11/15/22) |

| Phase 2 | |
|--|--|
| Deliverable | Completed |
| Documentation of launch | Yes (Attachment C) |
| Documentation of 1 meeting with partners | Yes (Meetings 12/7/22, 1/9/23, 2/1/23 etc.) |
| Letter of intent to plan for permanence | Yes (Attachment D) |

| Phase 3 | |
|---|------------------|
| Deliverable | Completed |
| Letter stating plan for permanence has been established | No |
| Summary of implementation actions | No |

| Phase 4 | |
|------------------------------------|------------------|
| Deliverable | Completed |
| Documentation of final report | Yes |
| All elements of Appendix A are met | No |

| Administration | |
|--|------------------|
| Deliverable | Completed |
| Funding released in accordance with Appendix A (DEEP: "These funds are for hiring Waste Zero again after the 5 months expired.") | No |

Pre- and Post-Implementation Waste & Recycling Data

Waste and recycling data were tracked by WZ. Metrics included clean food capture rate, pounds of food scraps captured, contamination rate, percentage waste reduction, and percentage diversion (recycling + food scraps). The final, cumulative set of data for Ansonia was made available 8/21/23 read as follows:

| Pilot Program | # of Weeks of Data | Collection Type | *Clean Food Capture Rate | Food Scraps Captured (cumulative lbs.) | Contamination Rate (prior week) | Waste Reduction | Curbside Diversion (Recycling + Food Scraps) Increase |
|---------------|--------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|--|---------------------------------|-----------------|---|
| Ansonia | 30 | Co-Collection | 15% | 236,117 | 9% | 17% | 44% |

Additionally, WZ charted overall diversion, diversion rate change, recycling increase, weekly food capture, and waste reduction week-by-week. The graphs are included as Attachment E.

Pilot Successes

- Phone calls, event attendance, and green & orange bags lining the streets on trash day sent a clear message: hundreds of Ansonia residents were willing to participate in the trash reduction pilot.
- Resident interest in recycling increased as a result of this pilot. NVCOG received numerous phone calls and emails with recycling questions, even after the pilot had concluded.
- Ansonia experienced a noteworthy increase in diversion (44%) and an increase in waste reduction (17%) compared to the previous year. This indicates that the pilot was working as intended by capturing food scraps and sparking changes in behavior.
- A number of positive quotes were received from residents, as recorded in Ansonia's and NVCOG's progress reports.
- Partnerships were initiated with local businesses, Ansonia Public Library, Country Disposal, and other stakeholders. These could prove useful for potential future efforts.

Pilot Challenges

- The timing of the pilot's launch was challenging for two reasons: first, DEEP only finalized the contract two weeks before the start date, leaving Ansonia little time to prepare and get the word out to residents. Second, starting a waste reduction program during the holidays (a busy and waste-intensive time of year) contributed to these difficulties.
- The initial estimate for the number of participating houses in the pilot area was incorrect, leaving Ansonia over 1,000 boxes of bags short. This forced the 9-month pilot into a 7-month pilot.
 - DEEP never replied to the request for extra funding, which would have restored the pilot to 9 months.
- Communication between City decision-makers, and DEEP/NVCOG/Waste Zero became a significant challenge during the second half of the pilot.
 - There was an inability to meet and communicate consistently with the Board of Aldermen.
 - There were fundamental misunderstandings about finances and the purpose of the pilot that were never resolved.

- According to DEEP and WZ, not all of the green bags collected in Ansonia made it to the anaerobic digester due to issues with Country Disposal and Quantum Biopower.
- The number of food scrap collection bins budgeted for in the grant fell considerably short of accommodating demand. Even with a second shipment, there were still many people who wanted the free food scrap bins.
- NVCOG was asked to pause outreach activities less than halfway through the pilot period. Opportunities to promote the project beyond the launch and share data and facts that might have reduced some misinformation were missed.
- No feedback sessions were held for residents.
- Misinformation and negative back-and-forth on Facebook promulgated a bad reputation for the pilot and might have swayed the opinions of Aldermen.
- The amount of time between the submission of Ansonia’s requests for reimbursement and the receipt of funds was unacceptable in the eyes of municipal staff. This ongoing situation may have discouraged the City from pursuing future undertakings with DEEP.

Metrics Applicable to Other CT Municipalities

Other Connecticut towns may be interested in the data exhibited in Attachment E, as an indicator of whether a similar pilot would make sense for their community. A demographic analysis can help those communities understand what similarities and difference they share with Ansonia, and whether its SMM metrics may be applicable.

| Metric | Ansonia | Comparable Communities (Census Designated Places with stats +/- 10%) |
|---|----------------|---|
| <i>Population</i> | 18,932 | New Canaan, Rocky Hill, Bethel, Berlin, Southbury, Waterford, Avon, Monroe, East Lyme, Stonington, Wilton, Montville, Killingly, Madison, Brookfield, Plainville |
| <i>Population density</i> | 3,058 | Glenville, Brandford Center, Greenwich, Cos Cob, West Hartford, Oakville |
| <i>Square mileage</i> | 6.02 | Manchester, Ridgefield, Stafford Springs, Durham, Broad Brook, Portland, New London, Storrs |
| <i>Median household income*</i> | \$67,474 | Bethel, Hazardville, Colchester, Niantic, Saybrook Manor, Stonington, Portland, Litchfield, South Coventry, Wilton Center, Windsor Locks, Bantam, Stratford, Guilford Center, Danbury, Oakville, Terryville, Suffield Depot, Deep River Center, East Haven, Middletown, North Grosvenor Dale, Canaan, Branford Center |
| <i>Poverty rate</i> | 11.4% | Norwalk, Bristol, Torrington, Meriden, Danbury, West Haven, Middletown, Manchester |
| <i>Owner-occupied rate</i> | 53.9% | Comparison unavailable |
| <i>Language other than English spoken at home</i> | 27.4% | Comparison unavailable |

All stats are from census.gov. Comparisons are from usa.com. *Income comparison data is from 2010-2014, so it is outdated.

Note that further investigation would need to be undertaken to determine if the comparable communities have a similar waste management system to Ansonia's.

Next Steps

Ansonia does not have any plans to continue the strategies piloted during the SMM grant at this time.

The City acknowledges that a pay-as-you-throw or unit-based pricing (UBP) program could fund the continuation of the organics diversion efforts from the pilot. However, it is the belief of City staff and officials that UBP is not a good fit for Ansonia. Due to Ansonia's status as [an economically distressed and environmental justice community](#), any program that would put a financial burden on residents is unlikely to gain enough support for implementation.

That being said, Ansonia encourages other municipalities to look into the benefits of combining and organics program with UBP, both as a funding mechanism and as a waste reduction tool.

Attachments

- Attachment A: Letter from City of Ansonia to CT DEEP dated 1/20/23
- Attachment B: Selected Posts from NVCOG's @NVCOGReduceTheTrash Facebook Account
- Attachment C: Ansonia SMM Flyer dated 12/5/22
- Attachment D: Letter from City of Ansonia to CT DEEP dated 5/12/23
- Attachment E: Waste Zero Graphs from 8/21/23

*Report Prepared by Christine O'Neill
Environmental Planner II, NVCOG
coneill@nvcoqct.gov | 203-489-0351*



City of Ansonia
253 Main Street
Ansonia, Connecticut 06401

January 20, 2023

To: Chris Nelson, CT DEEP Sustainable Materials Management Program
CC: Chelsey Hahn; Jenn Weymouth; Christine O'Neill; Katie Schlick
From: *Sheila* Sheila O'Malley, Ansonia Economic Development Director
Subject: **Ansonia Request for Additional Funding**

Ansonia's Sustainable Materials Management (SMM) pilot program launched at the beginning of December with orange and green bag distribution to all residential buildings containing less than five units. During the distribution process, it was discovered that the number participating of households had been underestimated. The figure given by the now-retired Public Works Director for the grant application was 5,941 households; Waste Zero rounded up and ordered 6,000 boxes. However, this number did not account for all multifamily households, leaving the distribution crew short about 1,100 boxes during what was supposed to be the final distribution day, December 5, 2022. The constrained timeline of the rollout did not leave an opportunity for the typical double-checking.

In order to deal with this issue as swiftly as possible, Ansonia, CT DEEP, NVCOG, and Waste Zero agreed to truncate the pilot from nine months to seven. This gave Ansonia immediate access to funds for the additional bags. Those bags were produced, shipped, and distributed by December 22. As of today, all participating households have an adequate supply of bags.

Ansonia is requesting additional funding from DEEP to restore the program to its original nine-month duration. Budget computations by Waste Zero indicate that a grant in the amount of **\$45,385** would fill the gap left by the miscalculation. Please see the attached spreadsheet for details.

Please let us know what you need from us in order to process this request. Thank you for your consideration. Kindly direct any questions to Sheila O'Malley (somalley@ansoniacct.org) with Christine O'Neill (coneill@nvcogct.gov) CC'ed.



NVCOG Reduce the Trash

Published by Katie Schlick · January 17 ·



Pssst Ansonia!

☺ Stop by the [Ansonia Public Library](#) this Saturday, January 21 between 11 am - 1 pm for the Trash Reduction Pilot Program Kickoff Fair! The City is giving away free household compost bins(!!!), snacks, and tons of information about the program. All are welcome. Bring your questions and ideas.

You can also check out the library's new environmental book collection for kids and adults! 📖♻️



<https://reducethetrashct.com/ansonia>

TRASH REDUCTION
PILOT PROGRAM

@ ANSONIA
PUBLIC LIBRARY

KICKOFF FAIR!



SATURDAY,
JAN 21,
2023

11 AM - 1 PM

[ReduceTheTrashCT.com/Ansonia](https://reducethetrashct.com/ansonia)



NVCOG Reduce the Trash

Published by Katie Schlick · January 18 ·



Always fun to talk TRASH (reduction) in Ansonia as y'all lead the way toward a more sustainable future! Thanks to all who joined! We're excited for more community conversations in the coming months 🥳👏





NVCOG Reduce the Trash

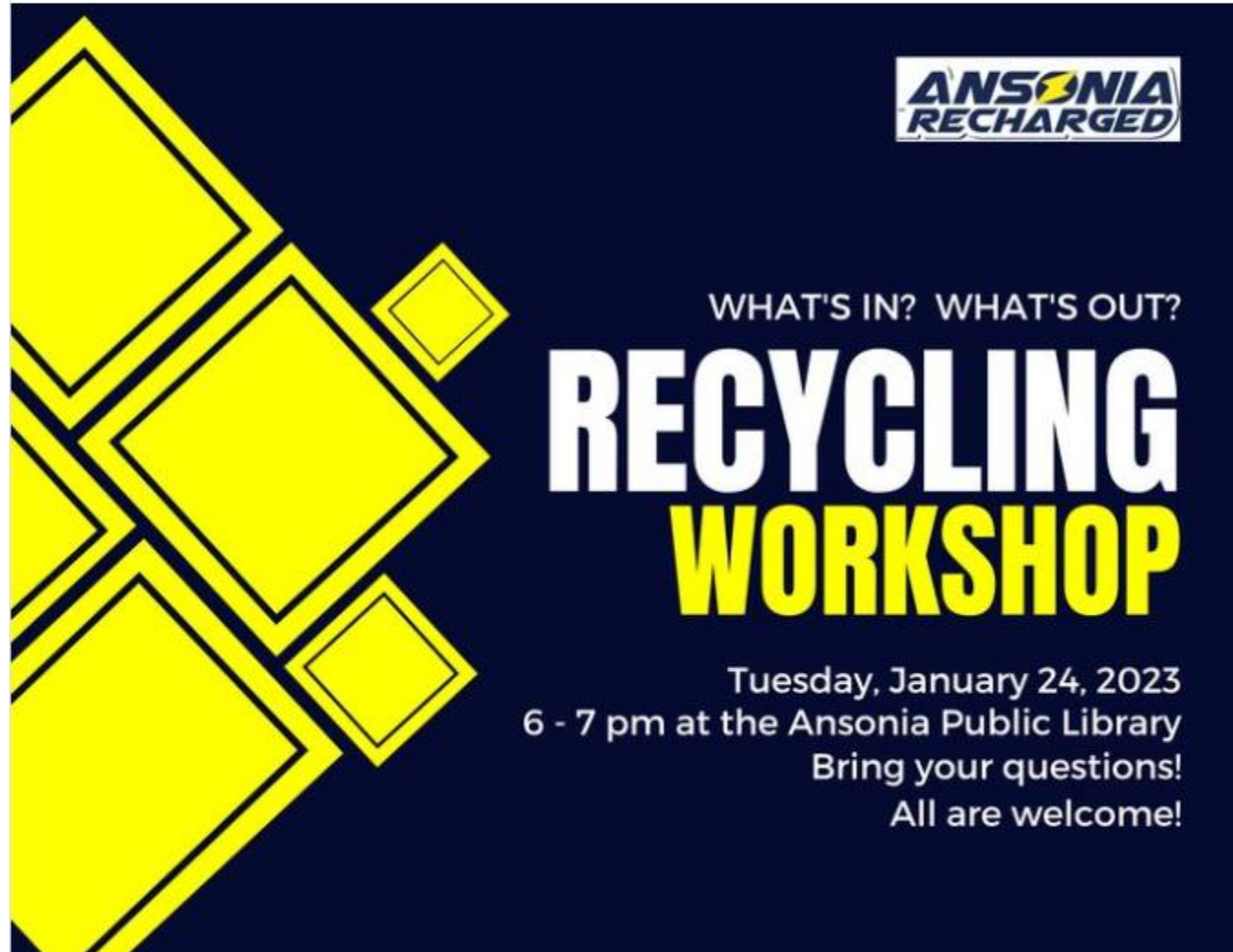
Published by Katie Schlick · January 20 ·



?? ? Confused on what to recycle? We've got answers!

The CT State Recycling Coordinator will give an awesome interactive presentation on recycling this Tuesday, January 24 from 6-7 pm at the Ansonia Public Library. Bring your questions! All are welcome 😊♻️

And rumor has it there will be some giveaways for those who attend...

A promotional poster for a recycling workshop. The background is dark blue with a large, abstract graphic on the left side consisting of overlapping yellow and white geometric shapes, resembling a recycling symbol or a stylized 'R'. In the top right corner, there is a logo for "ANSONIA RECHARGED" in white and yellow. The main text is centered on the right side, starting with "WHAT'S IN? WHAT'S OUT?" in white, followed by "RECYCLING WORKSHOP" in large, bold, white and yellow letters. Below that, the date and time are listed: "Tuesday, January 24, 2023 6 - 7 pm at the Ansonia Public Library". The final text reads "Bring your questions! All are welcome!" in white.

ANSONIA RECHARGED

WHAT'S IN? WHAT'S OUT?
**RECYCLING
WORKSHOP**

Tuesday, January 24, 2023
6 - 7 pm at the Ansonia Public Library
Bring your questions!
All are welcome!



NVCOG Reduce the Trash

Published by Christine O'Neill · March 3 ·

Did you run out of green or orange bags before the end of Ansonia's Trash Reduction Pilot? 😞
More bags are now available for purchase at SSDJ Mini Mart.

- Green bags: \$1.19 for a roll of 5 (23 cents per bag)
- Orange bags: \$1.58 for a roll of 5 (32 cents per bag)

📍 SSDJ Address: 262 Main St, Ansonia, CT 06401

📞 SSDJ Phone Number: (203) 308-2468



NVCOG Reduce the Trash

Published by Christine O'Neill · March 22 ·

"Why is it the residents' responsibility to get us out of the waste crisis?"

This is a (very valid!) question that we often hear regarding the Trash Reduction Pilots. The answer is that [Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection \(DEEP\)](#) actually has a whole bunch of efforts underway to address the waste crisis! Check out...

📺 This two-minute video on a bill working its way through the legislature that would make companies responsible for disposal of their packaging:

<https://www.nbcconnecticut.com/.../governor.../2995159/>

♻️ This Facebook page for [Recycle CT](#), DEEP's recycling education branch that regularly presents to schools and towns.

📰 This press release on the [Center for EcoTechnology's](#) partnership with DEEP, which explains CET's 🌞 free 🌞 technical assistance offered to CT businesses who want to reduce and divert their waste: <https://portal.ct.gov/.../DEEP-Announces-Assistance...>

📄 This webpage on DEEP's Regional Waste Authority grants (local governments coming together under a regional org to achieve an economy of scale): <https://portal.ct.gov/.../Regional-Waste-Authority-Grant...>



NVCOG Reduce the Trash

Published by Christine O'Neill · April 12 ·



Ansonia, Seymour, and Woodbury get a shout-out in this article about efforts throughout the Valley to reduce food waste.



BEE-NEWS.COM

Towns recycle food waste

#MiddleburyCT #FoodWaste By MARJORIE NEEDHAM Three towns that are members of the 1...



NVCOG Reduce the Trash

Published by Christine O'Neill · May 17 ·



Ansonia, thank you for doing your part to help save taxpayer dollars, limit waste, and solve Connecticut's waste crisis. Keep up the good work! 🍌🌿🌟

Ansonia's Solution to the Waste Crisis

Connecticut faces a waste crisis—



TOO MUCH TRASH. No more room.

If nothing is done,

around **850,000 TONS** of trash will need to be **SHIPPED OUT OF STATE.**



Disposal costs will rise by as much as 60% if we do nothing.

WE HAVE A SOLUTION:

A waste reduction pilot program.

WE NEED YOUR HELP

to slow rising costs and make our community cleaner by separating our food scraps from our trash and recycling better.



Thanks for doing your part!

CITY OF ANSONIA TRASH REDUCTION PILOT PROGRAM Starts December 5



**ANSONIA HAS A SUSTAINABLE,
COST-EFFECTIVE SOLUTION TO
CONNECTICUT'S WASTE CRISIS...
AND WE NEED YOUR HELP!**

A NOTE FROM THE MAYOR

Connecticut's trash is piling up, and we are quickly running out of residential landfill space. **Disposal costs are rising** as communities must ship waste out of state.

Ansonia has been awarded a grant from the CT Department of Energy & Environmental Protection (DEEP) to run a **9-month-long Trash Reduction Pilot Program**.

We have to do something to address the waste crisis and get ahead of rising costs, so I am asking all residents to participate in this **FREE** city-wide pilot program.

Your participation and feedback will help us decide if we want to make it permanent. Thank you for giving it a try.

MAYOR DAVID S. CASSETTI



**USE THE COLOR-CODED
TRASH & FOOD SCRAP BAGS
DELIVERED TO YOU.**

Green Bags for Food Scraps.
Orange Bags for Trash.
Keep Recycling.

**PUT BOTH BAGS IN
YOUR TRASH CART ON
YOUR REGULAR
COLLECTION DAY.**



**YOUR FOOD SCRAPS
WILL BE SEPARATED OUT
AND TURNED INTO
CLEAN ENERGY AT AN
INDUSTRIAL COMPOSTER.**

ReduceTheTrash@nvcogct.gov

(203) 489-0368

ReduceTheTrashCT.com/Ansonia



**LEARN MORE:
<< SCAN TO DOWNLOAD
THE MOBILE APP**

HOW-TO: Trash Reduction Pilot Program

Starts December 5



**ANSONIA
RECHARGED**

CITY OF ANSONIA



Q: WHAT'S IN THE BOX?

A 9-month supply of free bags: **78 Orange Trash Bags** & **37 Green Food Scraps Bags!** As you reduce your trash, this should be enough bags. Local stores will sell them, too.



Q: WHAT GOES IN THE GREEN BAG?

Food Scraps: Fruits & vegetables, meat & seafood (including bones), eggs & eggshells, leftovers & spoiled food, coffee grounds & tea bags, pastas, bread, grains, & napkins.
Please do NOT include plastic, pet waste, sanitary items, or metal.



Q: WHAT GOES IN THE ORANGE BAG?

Anything that doesn't go in the Green Food Scraps Bag and can't be recycled.



Q: WHERE DO I PUT MY FULL BAGS?

In the **same** trash can, on the **same** pick-up day. They will be sorted later.



Q: WHY CAN'T I USE MY NORMAL TRASH BAGS?

We are asking you to **use ONLY the special heavy-duty Orange Trash Bags**. Bags will be collected together, and the color-coding allows for **sorting**. We are also building the habit of using special city trash bags that help "measure" each household's trash.



Q: DO I STILL RECYCLE?

YES! Continue to put recyclables in the **blue bin**. Go to RecycleCT.com with questions.



Q: DO I NEED TO PUT ANOTHER GARBAGE CAN IN MY KITCHEN?

Do what works best for your household! You could get (or repurpose) a small container with a lid to hold the Green Food Scraps Bag, or you could keep the Green Bag loosely tied in your trash cart and empty food scraps into it throughout the week.

Q: IS THIS ACTUALLY GOING TO WORK?

- Turning all of our food waste into **clean energy** makes a huge difference. The program also introduces the idea of moving the cost to dispose of trash **OUT** of your taxes and **INTO** the bags. **The less trash you make, the less you would pay.** With these tools, you **can** reduce your trash and save money.
- You may be trying this for the first time, but cities all over the U.S. (and the world!) have **successfully** piloted similar trash reduction programs. **Ansonia will succeed with your participation!**

Christine O'Neill

From: Kurt Miller <kmiller@ansoniaact.org>
Sent: Friday, May 12, 2023 3:02 PM
To: Nelson, Chris
Cc: Christine O'Neill; Cristina Molina; David Cassetti; Granstrand, Luciana; Hahn, Chelsey; Sheila OMalley; Weymouth, Jennifer
Subject: Re: Ansonia - SMM Grant Deliverables - Important Reminders

CAUTION: This email originated from outside your organization. Exercise caution when opening attachments or clicking links, especially from unknown senders.

Dear Chris,

I am writing to notify DEEP that it is the City of Ansonia's intent to consider, pending board approval, a plan for implementation of a permanent program for city-wide food scrap collection. Our goal is to continue our feasibility study to determine the actual potential of the program. We look forward to speaking with the Commissioner in the near future. Should you need any additional information, please let me know.

Thanks.... Kurt

--

Kurt Miller

Chief Fiscal Officer
City of Ansonia

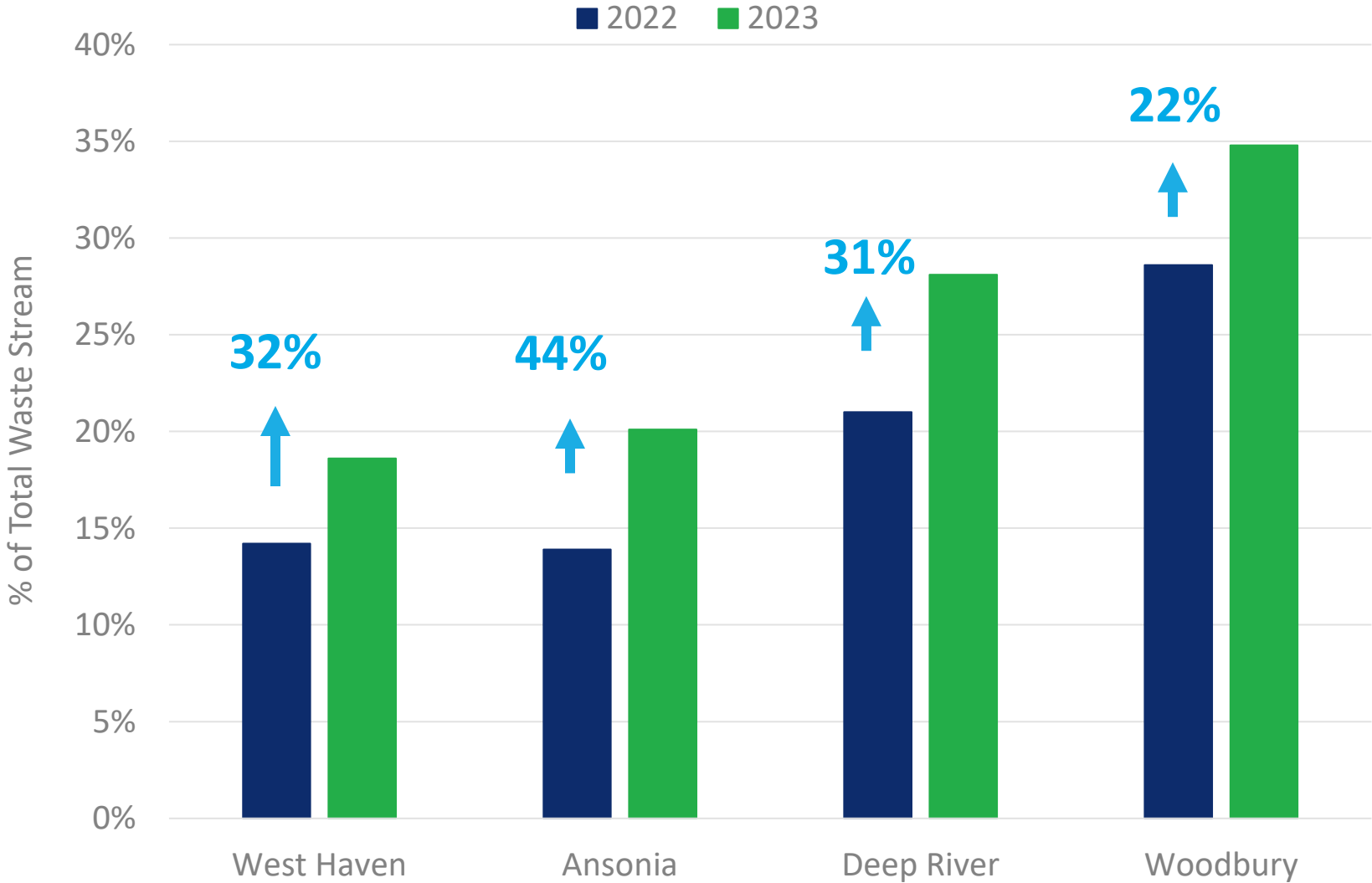
(203) 751-1848
253 Main Street
Ansonia, CT 06401

www.cityofansoniam.com

SMM GRANT PROGRAM STATUS

| Pilot Program | November 2022 | December 2022 | January 2023 | February 2023 | May 2023 | July 2023 | August 2023 | September 2023 |
|---------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|----------|-----------|-------------|----------------|
| West Haven | Launched | | | | | | | |
| Middletown | Launched | | | | | | | |
| Ansonia | | Launched | | | | | | |
| Stonington | | | Launched | | | | | |
| Deep River | | | | Launched | | | | |
| Woodbury | | | | Launched | | | | |
| Seymour | | | | Launched | | | | |
| Guilford | | | | | Launched | | | |
| Madison | | | | | Launched | | | |
| West Hartford | | | | | Launched | | | |
| Middlebury | | | | | | Launched | | |
| Kent | | | | | | Launched | | |
| Meriden | | | | | | | Launched | |
| Newtown | | | | | | | Planned | Planned |
| Bethel | | | | | | | Launched | |

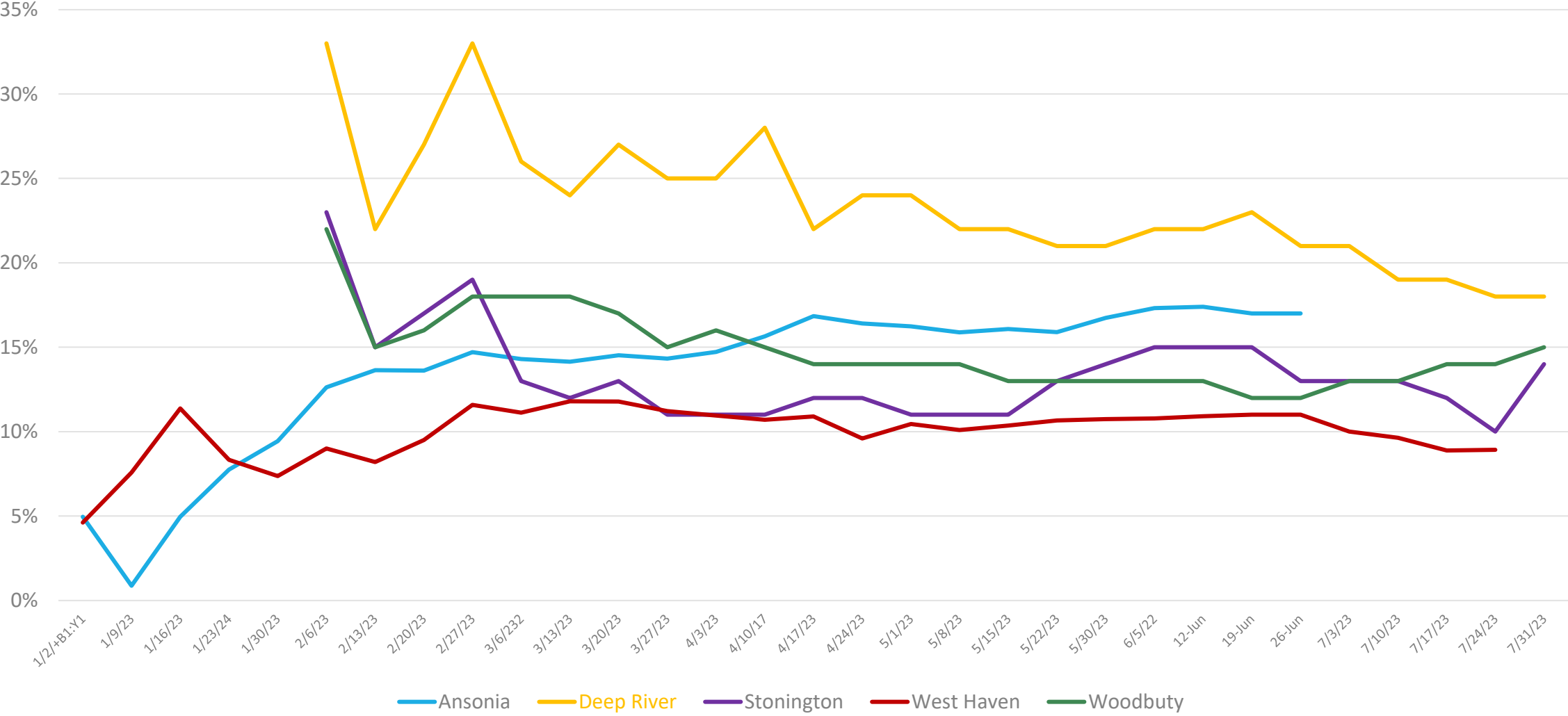
SMM GRANT PILOT CUMULATIVE DIVERSION RATE CHANGE (RECYCLING + FOOD SCRAPS)



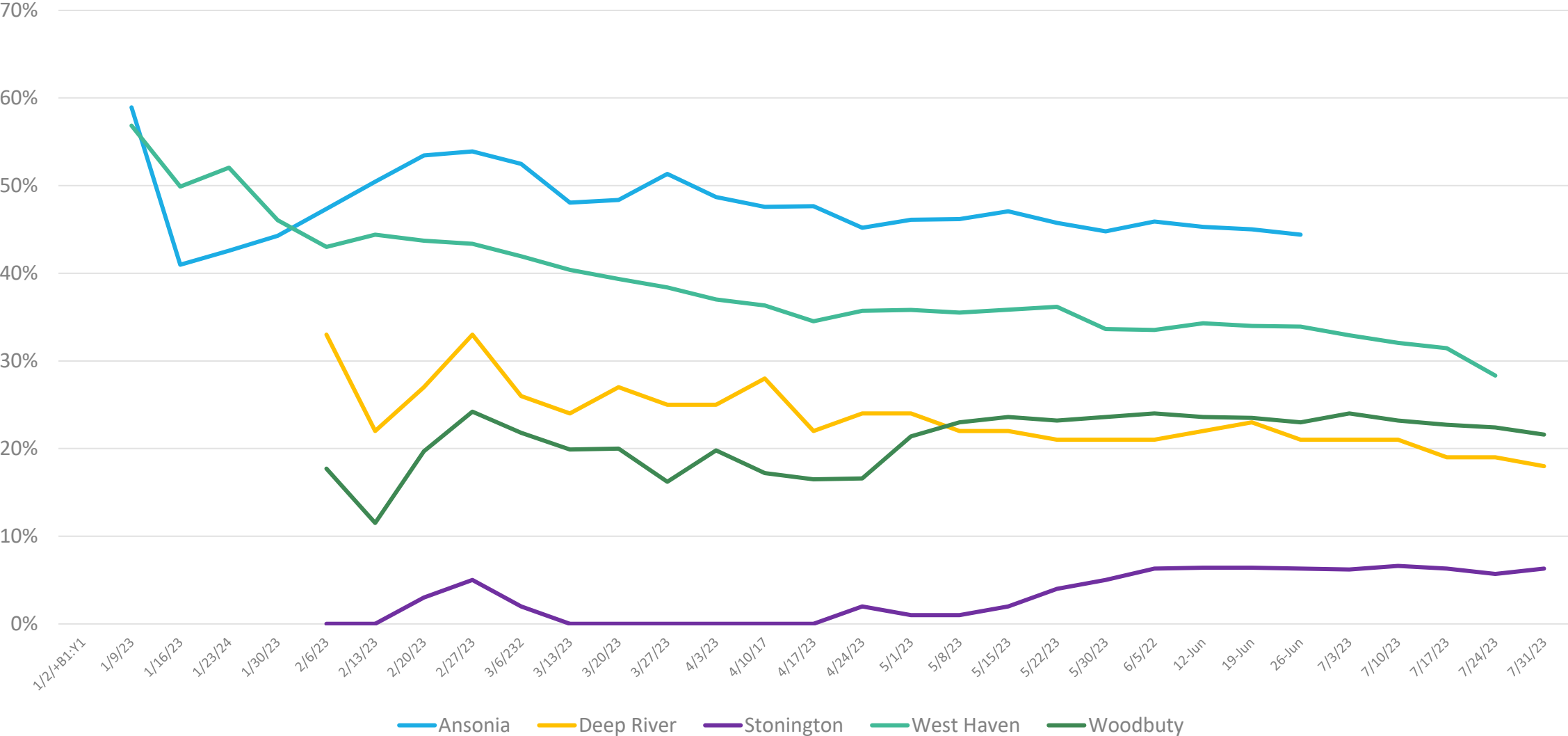
SMM GRANT PROGRAM – KEY INDICATORS

| Pilot Program | # of Weeks of Data | Collection Type | *Clean Food Capture Rate | Food Scraps Captured (cumulative lbs.) | Contamination Rate (prior week) | Waste Reduction | Curbside Diversion (Recycling + Food Scraps) Increase |
|---------------|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|--|---------------------------------|-----------------|---|
| Ansonia | 30 | Co-Collection | 15% | 236,117 | 9% | 17% | 44% |
| Deep River | 27 | Drop Off | 41% | 60,040 | .6% | 18% | 31% |
| Middletown | 30 | Co-Collection | 17% | 84,701 | 16% | N/A | N/A |
| Seymour | 28 | Co-Collection | 13% | NA | 13% | N/A | NA |
| Stonington | 24 | Separate Collection | 35% | 247,900 | 1% | 12% | 6% |
| West Haven | 38 | Co-Collection | 14% | 495,858 | 19% | 9% | 32% |
| Woodbury | 26 | Drop Off | 22% | 46,360 | 2% | 15% | 22% |
| West Hartford | 13 | Separate Collection | 58% | 45,750 | 2% | NA | NA |

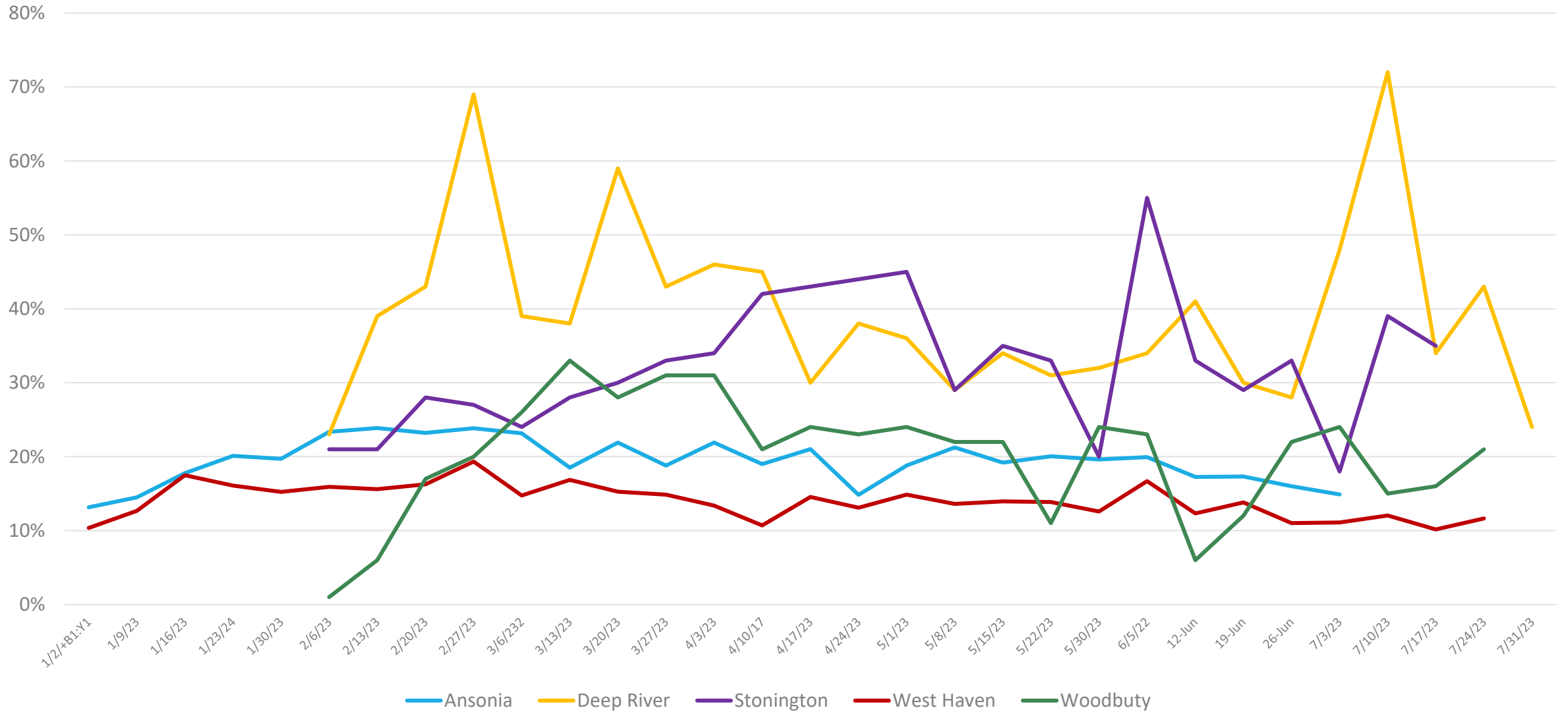
SMM GRANT DIVERSION (CUMULATIVE WEEKLY TREND 2022 TO 2023)



SMM GRANT RECYCLING INCREASE (CUMULATIVE WEEKLY TREND 2022 TO 2023)



WEEKLY FOOD CAPTURE RATE (CLEAN FOOD MINUS CONTAMINATES)



SMM GRANT PILOT CUMULATIVE WASTE REDUCTION

