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- Timothy Gunther
Director, Bergen County Zoo

Bergen County Zoo

The Bergen County Zoo in New Jersey, a nationally accredited zoological park, is part of the Bergen County Parks Department. A relatively small facility at 10 acres, but located near New York City, the zoo gets heavy traffic with about 400,000 visitors annually. The Zoo runs a very active environmental education center for kids of all ages. It is in this setting that solar powered trash compaction was deployed to help keep the Zoo clean and litter free.



There are a number of trash receptacles placed throughout the Zoo to provide visitors with ample opportunity to dispose of their trash properly, but the main concentration of trash is near the food court—a paved area with a food concessionaire. This area had six 35-gallon trash cans spaced out around the food court. Staff would empty these cans daily, and twice per day on busy days. The trash collection burden is a significant demand on staff time, as the main visitor areas must be kept clean and litter-free. The Zoo also has had a major problem with bees around the trash cans.

A Real Time-Saver

In 2006, the Zoo placed two *BigBelly*[®] compactors in the food court to replace the six traditional cans that served the area. As a result, the zoo has reduced its trash collection frequency from twice a day to every two or three days.

	No. of cans and frequency	Collections per week
Before <i>BigBelly</i>:	6 cans, 9 times per week	54 collections per week
After <i>BigBelly</i>:	2 units, 3 or 4 times per week	7 collections per week
		Savings: 87%

“Keeping up with the trash is a real challenge for time—we had to empty six cans daily in the food court, and twice a day on nice weekends,” said Timothy Gunther, Zoo Director. “We replaced the six cans with two *BigBellys* and now only have to empty them every other day. It’s been a tremendous time savings.”

Improved Visitor Experience

Mr. Gunther also reports that staff never have to empty the *BigBelly* units during the day, thus avoiding collection activity during peak periods—freeing up staff for other tasks, and providing a better aesthetic environment for visitors. “We also have a pest problem with bees – a big problem,” said Mr. Gunther. “But it’s much better with the *BigBelly*, since it’s enclosed.”

Based on this early success, the Bergen County Parks Department bought an additional ten *BigBelly* solar compactors, which were installed in the Zoo and other high-traffic park locations. “The machines have been problem-free —not a single hiccup,” said Mr. Gunther.