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City of Duluth Parks and Recreation Division

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SUBJECT: Solar Powered Trash Compactors Installed Along Lakewalk

BY: Amy Norris, Public Information Coordinator

City of Duluth installs solar powered trash compactors along Lakewalk: 'Toss it Green'

Mayor Don Ness unveiled today the City of Duluth's first solar powered trash and recycle containers along the Lakewalk. Ten trash compaction and ten recycling units have been placed along Duluth's Lakewalk between the Aerial Lift Bridge and 26th Avenue East. The Big Belly solar-powered trash/recycle units wirelessly communicate via a short-message service-i.e. text messaging. A central server allows the City of Duluth Park Maintenance Division to review the status of all Big Belly trash cans in real time. This new 'Toss it Green' system funded by a grant from the Department of Natural Resources Solar Energy Legacy funds, will make single stream recycling easy for Lakewalk users. Plastic bottles, glass jars, newspapers, magazines and metal cans-all the things that use to end up in public trash containers-now have a place of their own.

"We will minimize the number of trips to remove waste from the containers by knowing the status of each container", says Tom Kasper, Park Maintenance Manager. The math is simple: reduce the number of times you trek out to empty trash containers and you automatically reduce gas, manpower and equipment maintenance it costs to remove the trash. These trash containers can hold five times as much as the same footprint of a traditional can. It is estimated collection frequency will be reduced up to 80 percent.

The Big Belly units use solar energy to run a compactor that reduces the trash and recycle materials. The unit operates on about the same amount of energy as one Christmas tree light. It runs on a 12 volt battery that is kept charged by its solar panel on sunny days or cloudy days. The battery provides a power reserve for several weeks, so it performs well even in northern latitudes like Duluth.

Similar to a mailbox or library book return hopper, the solar trash can opens via a pull down hopper where a person places the trash and then closes the door. The trash then falls into a watertight collection bin. The enclosed system keeps the trash inside the container instead of blowing out, overflowing, or being knocked over. It keeps out bees, and wasps, and larger pests such as racoons, skunks, bears and birds that can create messes for maintenance crews.

Many of the Lakewalk's 1 million visitors are dog walkers. As part of the 'Toss it Green' program new pet waste stations with biodegradable bags have been installed along the Lakewalk. Dog walkers will have the opportunity to simply grab a bag, pick up the waste and

deposit it into the station's biodegradable bag. City workers will then dispose of the waste properly. By offering a green alternative to dog walkers they too can participate in 'Toss it Green' with great success.

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