

Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC) Meeting Summary
October 25, 2018 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM
MassDEP, One Winter Street, Boston, MA

MassDEP Updates: RecycleSmart, Recycling Business Development Grant Awards

John Fischer of MassDEP provided several MassDEP updates to start the meeting. Please see the presentation posted with this summary for more information.

Q: Are there other glass business opportunities aside from producing processed glass aggregate (PGA)?

A: Yes, some companies are looking at processing glass to produce other products such as fiberglass or lightweight engineered fill.

Q: What do you see for the market for container glass?

A: It depends. The quality of glass is important, so potential uses can vary depending on whether the facility is sourcing MRF glass, drop-off center glass, or bottle bill glass. The proposals we see coming in are not proposing container glass operations.

C: The materials recycling plant in Charlestown said that if they could update their machinery, then there would not be a contamination problem. In five years, with new machinery, they could be able to meet the new contamination standards. They also said that contamination levels are higher because of single stream. We should revisit expanding the Bottle Bill to include more containers.

A: There is a need to do both things – to reduce the contamination of recyclables collected as well as to improve the sorting and processing efficiency at MRFs. Many MRFs are making machinery investments to significantly clean up material. However, even if MRFs could sort out all of the contaminants that they are receiving, they are typically receiving loads with 20-30% contamination, which makes the recycling system inefficient and expensive. Therefore, it is important to reduce contamination in the recyclables that we are setting out at the curb, as well as to improve MRF equipment and operations.

Q: Would these MRF upgrades be compatible with dual-stream collection?

A: Single-stream MRFs can process recyclables collected through dual stream collection, however most facility investments in our MRFs are focused on processing single stream recyclables. Where possible, there is interest in separate collection and management of cardboard.

MSW Consultants Capacity Study Draft Findings

John Culbertson of MSW Consultants presented on draft findings of the Materials Management Capacity Study that MSW Consultants is currently conducting under contract to MassDEP. This study is intended to help inform development of the 2030 Solid Waste Master Plan. Please see the presentation posted with this meeting summary for more information.

Q: What year was the data based on?

A: We predominantly used 2016 data in Massachusetts. There are a few cases where we used earlier years, i.e., for small composting facilities that no longer report annually. Surrounding states' data is a mix between 2015, 2016, and 2017, depending on the most recent data available.

Q: Do this include capacity for host community-only landfills, for which capacity is not "available capacity" in the same way as WTE capacity or other landfills? For instance, Bourne and Dartmouth don't take MSW from more than a select few communities.

A: Yes, the Bourne and Dartmouth landfills are included, as that capacity does contribute to overall statewide capacity.

Q: On the MRF slide (slide #15), what is the difference between the 690,000 tons of material received and the 629,000 tons of material recycled?

A: This reflects the residual material pulled out and sent for disposal by MRFs. For capacity purposes, the effected capacity is considered to be the 629,000 tons of material recycled, not including the residual amount sent for disposal.

Discussion of Best Management Practices for Cannabis Waste

Kay Doyle, a Commissioner with the Massachusetts Cannabis Control Commission (CCC), presented an overview of the CCC and its regulations. John Fischer of MassDEP followed with a presentation on the development of best management practices relative to the cannabis waste management requirements of the regulations. Please see the presentations posted with this meeting summary for more information.

Q: Is marijuana waste collection required to be done via separate, dedicated "one-off" routes or can they be combined with other loads? Handling this collection via a dedicated haul would be expensive and inefficient.

A: The regulations do not state specifically that it has to be a single load. However, the agent from the marijuana establishment is required to witness the disposal, which would be difficult to coordinate on a multi-stop route. Alternatively, these agents could self-haul their load to a disposal facility.

C: It would be helpful if this could be documented via paper records from the hauler and the disposal (or composting) facility, so that marijuana establishment agents do not have to witness the disposal in person.

Q: Is this mostly plant-based waste? Why does it not fall under the leaf and yard waste ban?

A: MassDEP feels that this material does not fit clearly within the waste ban definition of yard waste and, therefore, consider this material to be “vegetative material” under the waste bans. This is part of “commercial organic material” under the waste bans, which means that the waste bans only apply if a facility is disposing of one ton or more of this material per week.

Q: Are you requiring the waste to be ground on farms before it leaves the site? For most small farms, the grinders are at the compost facility and could be ground together with other materials. Where do you grind the material?

A: The regulations require the marijuana waste to be ground and mixed with other waste or organic material on site before it is collected. If farmers find it economically unfeasible to grind onsite, there is a waiver option that would allow them to grind at the compost facility.

Q: What do other states do?

A: Generally other states have similar requirements for grinding and mixing the material so it becomes unrecoverable.

Q: There will also be a waste stream from the product manufacturers and retailers. How will that get disposed?

A: If it contains marijuana, it would fall in the same category as needing to be mixed until it becomes unrecoverable. There is also a large portion of the waste that is exempt from the definition of marijuana i.e. mature stalks.

Q: Do you have to worry about the amount of THC in the material sent to be composted?

A: THC content varies depending on what part of the plant is being composted (significantly higher in the flowers than in the stalks, for instance). It would effectively be diluted in a compost process.

Q: Are the packages recyclable or compostable? Or is there manufacturer takeback?

A: The Cannabis Control Commission is still fleshing out these details.

C: Anaerobic digestion could alleviate these issues since the material does not lie around and the packaging would be managed, though it would have to go through a pre-processing step.

RecyclingWorks in Massachusetts - Fiscal Year 2017 Program Update

Emily Fabel of the Center for EcoTechnology (CET) provided an update on the fiscal year 2017 RecyclingWorks in Massachusetts and the Massachusetts Green Team programs. For more information, please see the presentation posted with this meeting summary.