

**Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP)**  
**Solid Waste Advisory Committee**  
**October 26, 2023 - 10:00 am**  
**Meeting Summary**

The meeting featured updates on several MassDEP programs, including recent research on solar panel recycling, the Sustainable Materials Recovery Program and Recycling Dividend Program grant awards, the upcoming Recycling and Reuse Business Development Grant round, MassDEP job postings, and a series of new Construction and Demolition (C&D) Subcommittee market development meetings. We also received annual updates from the Center for EcoTechnology on the RecyclingWorks in Massachusetts and Green Team programs and reviewed the Draft 2022 Solid Waste Data Update.

Question: Regarding eligible materials for the Recycling and Reuse Business Development Grant (RBDG), is there potential to add some plastics to the list that are currently not being captured by MRFs?

Answer: That's certainly a future possibility, especially with the upcoming focus on the reusable food service ware initiative. MassDEP has included certain plastics as eligible materials in the past and has awarded grants for plastic recycling. And coming off market development conversations of the past two years, these materials could be reconsidered in the future. MassDEP does continue to offer the Recycling Loan Fund, which is not limited to specific materials and features a rolling application cycle.

Comment: Perhaps solar panels can be added later.

Question: My company was recently approved through MassDEP to open a new composting facility. We are looking to expand our operation and equipment. It looks like we would be eligible for RDBG. Is that correct? If so, how would the grant work if we applied for both collection and processing, as our company does both?

Answer: MassDEP is currently finalizing the grant guidance. Potentially, applications could be considered for both collection and processing. However, there will be prioritization given the high demand for these grants. In this case, if eligible, it is likely one grant would be considered (either collection or processing but not both).

Comment: Our terms are important. Thank you for noting excess food as scraps and not waste.

Comment: It would be great to do a one-year anniversary of the textile waste ban. From a public education perspective.

Response: This is a great suggestion. The November RecyclingWorks newsletter highlights the milestone. On November 1, MassDEP's social media accounts (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) also celebrated successful textile recycling initiatives.

Comment: We went so far backwards during the pandemic with respect to reusable food service ware. It's good to have the Department of Public Health (DPH) involved in the discussion. There is a lot of ground to make up to dispel the idea that bringing a reusable bag to go shopping, for instance, is a COVID threat.

Response: It's been interesting to learn about the food code from DPH to help develop best practices for reuse of food service ware. Their guidance is helpful as we look to eliminate misconceptions among consumers and businesses.

Question: With respect to the Green Team, I recently heard that "reducing food waste" has been added to the Massachusetts science curriculum guidelines, effective Fall 2023. What great news! Is there any specific work CET will be doing in partnership with that?

Answer: The Green Team website does feature links to various activities and lesson plans aligned with MA Department of Education curriculum frameworks: [https://thegreenteam.org/library-curricula/#:~:text=Science%20and%20Technology/Engineering%20\(pdf\)](https://thegreenteam.org/library-curricula/#:~:text=Science%20and%20Technology/Engineering%20(pdf)). The resources may need to be updated for science.

Comment: With respect to C&D guidance on RecyclingWorks page, it doesn't specifically refer to cardboard. Cardboard is prevalent at construction sites with all the packaging and there's a misconception that facilities pull it out.

Response: Cardboard is an important material to capture in C&D debris. All 18 C&D processors operating in Massachusetts are separating cardboard for recycling.

Question: Are they pulling from mixed loads? Or only if already source separated?

Answer: Yes, mixed loads.

Response: The C&D materials web page on the RecyclingWorks website reference the Waste Bans in general. The C&D materials guidance page: <https://recyclingworksma.com/construction-demolition-materials-guidance/> talks about out specific construction materials and maybe there's an opportunity to address source separation from cardboard.

In this case study: <https://recyclingworksma.com/structure-tone-case-study/>, some materials were source separated and others mixed. It's clear that here's not a one-size-fits-all solution for collecting cardboard from different C&D sites.

Question: Are there any updates on increasing waste disposal ban inspections?

Answer: Yes. MassDEP has been working to increase inspections with existing staff. Those inspections had decreased (at one point stopping) during COVID due to health considerations but have since returned and increased from previous levels. There are also three posted positions specifically focused on Waste Ban inspection, enforcement and outreach that will enable us to increase waste ban inspections and enforcement.

Comment: Devens Recycling Center is now owned by Republic.

Question: Are any ash disposal facilities being planned to replace ones being closed?

Answer: MassDEP does not know what specific locations will be used for disposal of combustion ash after these locations are no longer available. This could go to ash landfills in other states, or other Massachusetts landfills could agree to accept ash for disposal.

Question: Regarding the Climate Chief's recent recommendations, one of the highlights is commercial organic waste and a statewide push to get compostable material out of waste. What plans does the Department have?

Answer: This has been a top priority for MassDEP over the past decade. The 2014 food waste disposal ban for businesses disposing of more than a ton of organic material per week was supported by market development investment and technical assistance. The threshold was changed to a half ton in 2022 and is expected to double the number of businesses subject to the ban. We continue to work on compliance and enforcement, outreach and technical assistance, which will be bolstered by the addition of new staff.

The next stage for food waste diversion is to capture material from smaller commercial generators and residents, working with cities and towns to expand programs that serve residents. We have a goal to decrease food waste by an additional 500,000 tons per year by 2030, diverting it from disposal and expanding our capacity to manage food waste with a focus on growth of the collection infrastructure (supported by the RBDG grants). Some great work has been done but there are opportunities to do more.

Question: Can we use the word "scrap" instead of "waste," referring to excess food in the report?

Answer: We've also heard the term "wasted food." The Solid Waste Data Update is written from a Solid Waste perspective, but we can consider making future changes.

Comment: MassPIRG's national network is conducting a series of issue webinars this fall, with plastics and fashion waste among them: <https://pirg.org/massachusetts/articles/2023legislativebriefings/>