

Solid Waste Master Plan Data Subcommittee
November 9, 2018, 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM
MassDEP, One Winter Street, Boston, MA
Meeting Summary

Massachusetts Materials Management Capacity Study, MSW Consultants

John Culbertson of MSW Consultants presented a summary of draft findings from the Materials Management Capacity Study. A copy of this presentation is posted with this meeting summary.

Q: Did MassDEP have conversations with the landfill facility staff before determining projected capacity?

A: No, however MassDEP provided input on the Bourne and other landfill capacity where we had information.

C: The Town of Bourne has not yet decided if they will continue managing ash after 2021, but it could be in their economic interest to do so. If Bourne extends the ash disposal contract, then that MSW capacity would remain the same and not increase after 2021.

Q: Did the data take into account the contaminated recyclables that ultimately end up as solid waste? Are recycling centers included?

A: Yes, materials recovery facilities (MRFs) are included, which MassDEP has confirmed are close to capacity. Single stream/mixed recyclables processing facilities are particularly full. The capacity study did not look into expanding site footprint. Recycling residue from MRFs was taken into account and subtracted from the amount of material received to provide a more accurate capacity figure.

C: Maybe the answer is to build additional recycling capacity. The market downturn will pass in a few years, so we need to anticipate the need for more capacity in the next 10 years. There is capacity for source separated recyclable materials, in addition to organics.

Q: Are facilities that take source separated materials and the tonnage handled by the bottle bill captured in the study? We need to use all the tools we can, not just single stream MRFs, to address the 2 million tons of recycling. In terms of planning, it is important to incorporate that capacity.

A: Neither of those numbers is currently integrated into the capacity study. Perhaps MassDEP could help find reported quantities to easily add into the study. There are facilities that accept source separated materials such as pallets, e-waste, and cardboard that are not accounted for in the capacity analysis. Similarly, separated materials from drop off residential recycling centers are not included in this analysis.

C: The reuse industry is not constrained, and it has enormous elasticity. There is nothing stopping anyone from starting a new reuse operation; it's all a matter of demand. Recycling operations are one step down from that. Permits are fairly easy to get. Both reuse operations and recycling operations are easier to site and open than new landfills or transfer stations.

C: The information in this study represents the existing data, but when can the conversation change to draw new conclusions and help shape the 2030 SWMP? We should not get sucked into operating along the status quo based on the projections.

Q: How often does MassDEP update snapshots of capacity? The systems in Massachusetts are evolving rapidly. When will the next study occur?

A: MassDEP updates disposal capacity projections on an annual basis. MassDEP does not have plans at this time to repeat this study, however, we may be able to update numbers in the underlying data tables to assess some capacity changes.

Draft 2017 Solid Waste Data Update

Greg Cooper of MassDEP presented MassDEP's Draft 2017 Solid Waste Data Update. This presentation is posted online along with this meeting summary.

C: Ash facilities are not included in the data. As those close, the volume that went to those facilities will be looking for capacity that might compete with MSW.

A: There have been proposals for ash recovery. In some cases, rail haul of ash might be more cost effective. Burn facilities must provide for ash capacity. MassDEP can consider ash management capacity as we move forward with the Master Plan development.

C: One problem with incinerators is that they do not dispose of 100% of the waste: they create a different type of disposal.