

Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC)
April 25, 2019, 1:00 – 3:00 pm
MassDEP, One Winter Street, Boston, MA
Meeting Summary

MassDEP Updates

John Fischer of MassDEP provided several updates on MassDEP programs and initiatives. These updates are posted on the SWAC web page along with this meeting summary.

Massachusetts Environmentally Preferable Products (EPP) Purchasing Program

Julia Wolfe of the Operational Services Division provided a presentation on the Massachusetts EPP Purchasing Program. For more information, please see the presentation posted along with the meeting summary.

Q: Do the state contracts allow for municipalities or small nonprofits to join together to purchase a large order?

A: Yes, as long as the order is being submitted by an entity eligible to purchase off of statewide contracts, and vendor payment and distribution is worked out with the vendor prior to purchase. Municipalities are eligible entities and certain approved non-profits are as well (see <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/who-may-use-statewide-contracts> for a detailed listing).

Q: Can colleges and universities use state contracts?

A: Yes, public colleges and universities can purchase off of statewide contracts through COMMBUYS, though they are not required to.

Q: With added interest in moving towards biodegradable and/or compostable materials, is OSD doing anything to educate purchasers and help make sure that they avoid alternatives with perfluorinated chemicals?

A: Yes, this issue is being reviewed relative to our contracts for disposable dishware, compostable products, and packaging. OSD relies quite a bit on third party specifications to address issues like these and will be assessing how these specifications address these chemicals of concern. OSD requested information from vendors on Statewide Contract GRO35: Foodservice Supplies and Equipment, Institutional Commercial Grade Large and Small on whether their offered products currently on contract contain levels of PFOAs and will disclose this information in the respective vendors price sheets.

Q: Is OSD doing anything to share your great work and knowledge with the private sector (purchasers) so we can increase purchasing of EPPs?

A: OSD does conduct a lot of outreach about EPP purchasing opportunities, including publishing the regular “Buy The Way” newsletter. Although private businesses are not eligible

to purchase off of statewide contracts, these contracts are public information and businesses could use this information to identify bid language and specifications, vendors and products that they may want to select to purchase.

Solid Waste Master Plan Framework

John Fischer of MassDEP provided a presentation on MassDEP's development of the draft 2030 Solid Waste Master Plan. That presentation is posted along with this meeting summary on the MassDEP web site. Participants discussed these issues as they were presented and this discussion is summarized below.

Master Plan Goals Proposed for Discussion

C: The Master Plan should provide high level strategies and goals. Then the work plans should support it and be flexible. I agree that work plans have been missing or not strong enough in previous plans. The Plan should include a section evaluating what has worked and what hasn't and why and then look at what is doable and how to overcome barriers. The Plan should also have specific strategies, actions, roles (which sector is responsible for what), timeline, and appropriate goals and metrics.

C: The Master Plan should be called the "Zero Waste Master Plan." Establishing this from the beginning will set the tone for the rest of the process. Another participant strongly agreed that this should be a Zero Waste Plan

R: MassDEP is required by statute to establish and maintain a "Solid Waste Master Plan" but we can discuss name changes further, including subtitles for the 2030 Plan.

C: MassDEP should consider using "integrated materials management" as a Plan subtitle.

Q: Can you elaborate on the program matrix you mentioned?

A: Many strategies cut across multiple sections of the Plan. MassDEP is, therefore, proposing to include a matrix that will include a row for each of our proposed programs and policies along with columns for which sections they apply to (e.g., source reduction, reuse, organics waste reduction, etc.). We believe this type of chart will help to clarify connections between different sections of the Plan, which are often closely linked. We are proposing to include this as an appendix in the Draft Plan.

C: Another helpful matrix would show which strategies in the plan MassDEP has the authority to enact and the things MassDEP can recommend but other decision makers have to enact (i.e. municipalities, state legislature).

Q: How do we account for population growth? As the population grows, solid waste tonnage will grow. Would you consider calculating waste reduction by per capita weight to account for population changes?

A: Population growth can make an overall reduction goal more difficult to calculate, since per capita reduction has to increase even more to meet an overall goal. MassDEP will conduct analysis of population growth since 2010 to compare how that has changed relative to solid waste disposal and will consider whether population change should be considered as part of a waste reduction goal.

Q: Please identify the vision of what elements of the current waste stream would no longer become "waste" to comprise the 90% reduction and the 10% that remains waste.

A: Meeting a goal of reducing disposal by 90 percent by 2050 would essentially mean reaching a zero waste level. This would require capturing all reusable, recyclable, or compostable materials at a very high percentage as well as phasing out use of materials, products, or packaging that are not readily reusable, recyclable or compostable.

C: This is an excellent goal, and it is good to have benchmarks along the way. However, in order to meet the goal, we need to step it up. There are some portions of the waste stream that we could achieve a nearly 100 percent reduction in such as food waste and cardboard.

R: Based on Massachusetts waste characterization data, approximately 40 percent of our trash is waste ban material, without including food material. MassDEP would strive to capture as high a percentage of these materials as possible.

C: I agree with aggressive goal and also advocate for funding and staff to achieve it. We need money for a major push on education and infrastructure.

C: While the Plan should be aggressive, it can't lose sight of the need for quality and best use of materials for recycling markets. No new single stream programs should be developed and MassDEP should instead support pilots for split carts or other improved source separation options, along with a major push to reduce contaminants. MassDEP should also consider additional infrastructure such as a plastics recovery facility.

C: Given our progress to date, a 90% reduction goal is very aggressive. If a large gasification and/or pyrolysis facility is sited, built, and operational here in MA, would this count towards reduction or still counted as disposal?

A: Gasification/pyrolysis would be counted as disposal (assuming it is for MSW or mixed C&D). There is a provision in the current master plan that allows for new waste to energy technologies to be exempt from the current municipal waste combustion moratorium however MassDEP has not received any permit applications in this area.

C: We should call out the compostable and recyclable items in the trash as being “illegal.”

C: We should also call anything diverted/removed from the stream “resources” instead of waste.

C: We should broaden the terminology from "compostable" to "organically recyclable" in order to encompass the range of organic recycling processes, including both anaerobic and aerobic digestion. Traditional composters may be reluctant to accept a broad range of materials, while AD facilities may be equipped for this complexity of materials from the start.

A: In the course of developing a strategy to lower the threshold of the commercial organics waste disposal ban, MassDEP will be conducting further analysis of organics management capacity and can consider these types of questions in that context.

Q: Shouldn't our disposal goal be related to our disposal capacity?

A: Yes, this is an important point to address and the Master Plan will include a focus on disposal and other materials management capacity. This will build off of the Massachusetts Materials Management Capacity Study that was conducted under contract to MassDEP by MSW Consultants.

C: No more disposal infrastructure should be built, as we should not need additional capacity.

Priorities Discussion

C: Linens services dispose of tons of perfectly good linens. Encouraging them to donate old linens instead of throwing them away could be a good RecyclingWorks in Massachusetts project.

A: MassDEP appreciates this suggestion and will work with the RecyclingWorks program to assess opportunities to work more closely with this and other targeted sectors on textile reuse and recycling.

C: Textiles should be added as a waste ban material.

A: MassDEP is considering adding textiles as a waste ban material as part of our Draft Master Plan recommendations.

C: The priorities should follow the hierarchy: reduce, reuse, and recycle. The plan is a great opportunity for public education. Diversion is different than source reduction and we should prioritize solutions at the top of the hierarchy.

C: Not all prevention/diversion is equal. Pulling all plastic bags out of the waste stream is low hanging fruit, but won't make a big difference in terms of tonnage. On the other hand, this could provide important benefits in reducing recycling contamination and litter.

Q: What are realistic percentages for different materials to get to the goals we are talking about?

A: MassDEP has been conducting analysis based on waste characterization data and will refine and clarify this analysis to present it at an upcoming SWAC meeting.

C: Single use paper packaging such as paper bags, coffee cups, or take out containers also have a large environmental impact and are often heavier than plastic. If even 1/3 of plastic bags are replaced by paper bags, then at 60% recovery rate, we still end up with a net increase in disposal as paper bags are 8x the weight of plastic counterparts. Plastic bag bans will put more paper bags into the recycling stream. We should encourage 100% recycled content in legislation rather than the current 40% requirement for paper bags.

C: The recently filed single-use plastic bag ban bill also established a mandatory 5 cent fee on paper bags. If the bill passes, there will be an overall reduction in use of paper bags due to this fee.

C: Newton is working on adding a 10 cent fee on paper bags and is happy about the H.771 legislation, which would not provide any free bags at the point of sale.

Q: What are the barriers to better enforcement of waste bans? Is it staffing? Lack of places to process/recycle? Is there the political will to commit to better enforcement?

A: MassDEP is currently in the process of filling one position that will focus on waste ban and recycling compliance and would like to further bolster these compliance and enforcement resources over time. MassDEP is also pursuing other routes to improve waste ban compliance including formal information requests to specific waste haulers and generators, particularly for food material. In addition, there is still a relatively low level of awareness about waste bans in general and MassDEP would like to raise this level of awareness, particularly among businesses and institutions.

C: Municipalities need money to do their own enforcement. Producers should be providing funds for municipalities to cope with this waste through extended producer responsibility (EPR) laws.

Q: Where will EPR be in this plan? It's a critical link in working with producers to redesign products and packaging to make it easier to recycle/repurpose. Cities and towns are getting sick and tired of paying all the cost of waste disposal & recycling.

A: MassDEP is interested in further pursuing EPR approaches for specific products and materials. MassDEP believes that specific materials such as paint and mattresses may have the best potential for EPR approaches.

Q: What is DEP doing to help businesses recycle packaging material?

A: MassDEP provides assistance and guidance to help businesses recycle through our RecyclingWorks in Massachusetts program.

C: From the perspective of a citizen who lives near a landfill, I really appreciate hearing about the state's efforts to reduce waste. These facilities cause many impacts to nearby residents and need to be eliminated. Landfills should not expand and continue polluting and harming communities just because we cannot manage our waste responsibly.

C: We need to address the issue of the incineration moratorium. We do not need more incinerators. Building more facilities negates the impetus to do more source reduction and reduce waste.

R: MassDEP expects to have further discussion of the municipal waste combustion moratorium, along with other capacity issues, at an upcoming SWAC meeting.

Q: Does MassDEP have grant money for organics diversion pilot programs for communities?

A: Yes, municipalities can receive several categories of grant funds to support organics diversion programs through MassDEP's Sustainable Materials Recovery Program.

C: MassDEP should provide best practices info to municipalities on how to integrate market development into collection and processing bids and contracts. An example of this is the [Boston Zero Waste Plan, Task 6: Suggested Zero Waste Economic Development Approaches.](#)