

Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC)
May 22, 2019, 1:00 – 3:00 pm
MassDEP, One Winter Street, Boston, MA
Meeting Summary

MassDEP Presentation and Analysis

John Fischer of the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) provided a presentation to inform development of Solid Waste Master Plan disposal reduction goals along with background information on materials management capacity. In addition, he reviewed an analysis titled “Draft Analysis – 2030 Solid Waste Master Plan Additional Waste Reduction Potential.” This analysis estimates 2017 waste disposal by material category for both municipal solid waste (MSW) and construction and demolition materials (C&D) based on waste characterization data. The analysis then presents two scenarios for meeting potential 2030 disposal reduction goals by establishing varying percentage disposal reductions by material category. MassDEP proposed these disposal reduction percentages based on our assessment of the relative additional waste reduction potential by material category. This analysis is intended to help inform the development of these goals as well as program planning to help achieve Massachusetts waste reduction goals. This presentation and the analysis are posted on the SWAC web page along with this meeting summary.

Discussion, Comments and Questions

Q: Are the C&D and Organics Subcommittees the only subcommittees that need to convene in anticipation of the 2030 Master Plan?

A: MassDEP has held regular meetings of both the C&D and Organics Subcommittees and expects to continue to meet with these subcommittees on an ongoing basis, both during and after the Draft Master Plan development. MassDEP has also held a recent meeting of the Data Subcommittee, and expects to hold another Data Subcommittee meeting to review draft 2018 solid waste data. MassDEP has also held SWAC meetings focused on source reduction and has participated in a number of other meetings with municipal officials to obtain input and share information on the Draft Master Plan development.

Q: Was there an Enforcement Subcommittee last time to make better use of the regulations and bans in place?

A: MassDEP has not had an Enforcement Subcommittee, although there have been many enforcement-focused discussions through SWAC and SWAC Subcommittees.

Q: What topics and issues does MassDEP propose to hold additional focused meetings to discuss?

A: At this point, there is not a lot of time left to gather input into a Draft Plan, as MassDEP is currently writing the Draft Plan. However, MassDEP expects to continue stakeholder

discussions on a wide range of topics after the development of the Draft Plan, as well as meetings focused on Master Plan implementation after the 2030 Master Plan is published.

Q: What is “total disposal” comprised of?

A: The total disposal in the analysis for this meeting includes about 4.5 million tons of MSW and about 700,000 tons of C&D materials. It does not include net export of about 500,000 tons of other non-MSW materials such as contaminated soil and sludges.

Q: Does MSW include waste disposed of at industrial landfills?

A: No. If solid waste is being managed outside the regular MSW facilities, then it does not show up in this data.

Q: Is ash from municipal waste combustors counted as disposal?

A: No, not for the purpose of this analysis, which is focused on additional waste reduction for MSW and C&D materials.

Q: Does MassDEP have data on municipal solid waste combustor ash disposed of in landfills?

A: Yes, in 2017, municipal waste combustors disposed of approximately 720,000 tons of ash in landfills.

Q: Is MassDEP saying that even though we are behind pace with meeting the current goal, we are proposing to make the goal more aggressive?

A: Yes, MassDEP would like to make our waste reduction goal as aggressive as possible. This is in part because we believe that increased waste reduction may be the best way we address materials management capacity shortfalls. However, we also want these goals to be realistic, which is why we are conducting this analysis to assess waste reduction potential by material category.

C: Looking at the most successful waste reduction case studies, the best goals appear to be along the lines of 70% in 10 years, and 90% in 30 years. These types of goals have the potential to transform the whole system and encourage people to change how they do business.

Q: For waste reduction potential, are we looking only at things that MassDEP can do, or does this also include actions that other entities can take?

A: The analysis of additional waste reduction potential, as well as the Draft Master Plan, will require actions by many entities, including solid waste, recycling and organics management facility operators, municipalities, businesses, and other state agencies. However, the Solid Waste Master Plan will focus most on what MassDEP can do to influence and foster actions by other parties.

C: It would be interesting to look retrospectively at the waste characterization data. In addition, it seems important to also focus on reducing the toxicity of the solid waste stream.

R: As far as waste reduction data, MassDEP is focused on forward looking analysis on additional waste reduction that can be achieved over the course of the next decade and beyond. Reducing the toxicity of the waste stream is an important priority as well and this is another reason to prioritize diversion and safe management of specific categories of material, regardless of tonnage amounts.

C: We need to look at what frameworks already exist that we need to strengthen such as enforcement of existing waste ban regulations. MassDEP should add another column to the analysis that highlights waste ban materials.

R: MassDEP will add a column designating which material categories are subject to waste disposal bans.

Q: This waste characterization data is specific to waste received at municipal waste combustion facilities. Does MassDEP believe there are significant differences between this waste and the waste disposed of at landfills and transfer stations?

A: MassDEP does not have detailed characterization data on waste received at landfills and transfer stations, so we do not know this answer for certain. However, we believe the waste streams are consistent for the most part, except that we believe there is a higher percentage of bulky materials that are disposed of at landfills and transfer stations than at municipal waste combustors. We did adjust the bulky waste disposal figure to attempt to account for this difference.

C: Landfills accept some materials that municipal waste combustors cannot.

C: This waste characterization data seems consistent with data from other states including Connecticut, which only has municipal waste combustion, and Rhode Island, which only has a landfill.

Q: Could MassDEP highlight some of this waste characterization data, specifically data about disposal of recyclable materials, through the Recycle Smart program?

A: Yes, MassDEP does intend to highlight this type of data through Recycle Smart social media postings.

Q: Does MassDEP expect an even reduction in waste from now until 2050 ? Aren't there diminishing returns over time?

A: MassDEP has not yet established a specific schedule for progressing towards a 2050 waste reduction goal. At this time, the proposed goal that we are discussing for 2030 assumes straight line waste reduction progress between now and 2050. While it is true that there could be

diminishing returns with some waste reduction progress, it also may be the case that some waste reduction that requires more systematic change could take longer to achieve.

C: Non-recyclable plastics should be banned, specifically polystyrene. This could be done through a statewide ban, such as the proposed ban on single use plastic. These should be totally out of the waste stream by 2050.

C: A lot of Styrofoam comes from wholesale food and medical packaging, which would not be addressed by banning single use styrofoam packaging products.

C: Because virtually all textiles are reusable or recyclable and there is a robust existing infrastructure this may be a good material to ban from disposal. RecyclingWorks in Massachusetts has begun to reach out to specific commercial generators of textiles to explore further reuse and recycling potential.

Q: Did MassDEP consider the market impacts of National Sword in preparing this analysis?

A: Yes, MassDEP did attempt to account for market conditions for recyclables in conducting this analysis, though these markets will continue to evolve over time, particularly looking 10 years ahead. MassDEP believes that most market prices that are down now will rebound over time.

Q: How do the Master Plan goals match up with disposal capacity over time? Will we still have to send material out of state?

A: MassDEP will need to balance progress towards our waste reduction goals with the need for waste disposal and management capacity over time. As part of the Master Plan development, MassDEP plans to develop and present analysis on how this progress would align over time. We know that we will continue to have waste that needs to be probably managed to protect public health and the environment.

C: The excess capacity shown for transfer stations is misleading, as there are not sufficient disposal outlets for transfer stations to deliver waste to.

C: Did the capacity study look at different regions in the state? This capacity can vary widely across the state in different regions.

A: No, the capacity analysis was done on a statewide basis, along with considering capacity available in other states.