

Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP)
Solid Waste Advisory Committee
May 30, 2023 - 10:00 am
Meeting Summary

Questions and answers about the Draft 2021 Solid Waste Data Update, posted on the web here:

<https://www.mass.gov/guides/solid-waste-master-plan#-solid-waste-data-updates->

Comment: The disposal trends (slide 2) match the pandemic window. Commercial MSW tailed off but people were renovating their homes, adding home offices, etc. so C&D went up. Both Home Depot and Lowe's now report that tailing off. It would be helpful to view statewide data for other sectors to better understand these trends.

Response: Since the meeting, MassDEP identified national data that shows a significant increase in residential renovation activities during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to a report issued by the Harvard Joint Center for Housing Studies (<https://www.jchs.harvard.edu/improving-americas-housing-2023>), national remodeling expenditures increased from \$444 billion in 2020 to \$495 billion in 2021. A further increase to \$567 billion was estimated for 2022.

Comment: (The trend) is at least worth an asterisk or comment in the report.

Comment: The Massachusetts population is up almost 170,000 since 2016. That might explain the overall increase in MSW. The Rhode Island Resource Recovery Corporation raised their tipping fee for non-MSW, which could explain an additional 120,000 tons imported to Massachusetts.

Response: Population increase leads to economic activity, so that is reflected in the GDP chart (slide 6). MassDEP considers GDP perhaps the most inclusive economic indicator to make these comparisons.

Question: Are there really zero tons of MSW and Non-MSW exported to Pennsylvania?

Answer: Yes. Pennsylvania has not accepted material from Massachusetts for some time.

Question: Are there other states that have stopped accepting out-of-state waste or are considering doing so?

Answer: Vermont certainly restricts out-of-state material and will only accept out of state waste in limited circumstances. It's not an outright ban, but they have limited capacity and are looking to preserve it.

Comment: Generally, the only places imports are restricted are government entities (county landfill, etc). Waste is a commodity. Pennsylvania and Michigan come to mind with a landfill tax for every ton disposed.

Question: Why does Massachusetts import waste from and export waste to the same states? For instance: Connecticut, Maine and New Hampshire?

Answer: Generally, the state in which a disposal facility is located is not a significant factor in determining where waste is delivered. Given that the solid waste system is primarily a privately run industry,

companies make decisions based on market factors such as distance, the ability to manage waste in their own facilities, contractual provisions, etc.

Comment: The proposed facility in New Bedford (slide 12) would operate six days a week, with a total of 1,500 tons per day. The annual amount in the table isn't accurate.

Response: MassDEP's Southeast Regional Office confirmed the proposed tonnage for this facility is 1,500 tons per day or 468,000 tons per year. This has been corrected in the final report.

Comment: The Massachusetts Soil Beneficial Reuse Coalition has discussed a shortfall on where soil from housing projects with varying degrees of contamination can go. There's a limited amount that can be exported and we're talking about literally millions of tons. This is an expense on the system that drives up the cost of management. There are tons being deferred for this reason, many years into the future.

Response: MassDEP is aware of concerns over limited capacity to manage soils and is continuing to engage in stakeholder discussions on these issues. On a related note, MassDEP discussed soil-related solid waste policy and regulatory issues at the April 18, 2023 meeting of MassDEP's Solid Waste Facility Issues Workgroup.

Comment: Capacity is tight and one outage, storm, etc. stresses the system. The vulnerability aspect eats into capacity, and a project for a new disposal site would take years to permit and develop.

Response: If you look at a capacity chart from ten years ago, there used to be more active landfills. This chart (slide 13) also doesn't reflect a lot of material managed outside of the system.

Comment: It would be informative to see the projections (slide 14) from five or ten years ago.

Response: These are available under the "Solid Waste Data Updates" heading at this link: <https://www.mass.gov/guides/solid-waste-master-plan>

Comment: Related to the need for reducing waste, the Environment and Natural Resources Committee will hold a hearing on solid waste related bills on the afternoon of June 14. People can sign up to testify or submit written testimony ahead of hearing. Info will be posted here <https://massrecycle.org/initiatives-events/massachusetts-product-stewardship-council/> soon.

Question: On the Ash Landfill Capacity slide (slide 11), I see a projected closure date of 2022 for the Haverhill Ward Hill landfill. I see no evidence that it is closed. Is that datum off?

Answer: Per MassDEP's Northeast Regional Office, capping was completed in 2022 of the last phases at the Ward Hill Neck Landfill in Haverhill. There are no additional phases permitted.

Question: Could you repeat the distinction between MSW and Non-MSW? Do you have a breakdown of what materials are considered in each bucket?

Answer: From MassDEP's annual reporting form instructions: MSW includes all types of solid waste generated in residences, stores, offices, institutions, restaurants, warehouses, and other non-manufacturing activities, or similar types of solid waste generated from manufacturing operations. MSW does not include solid waste generated in manufacturing or industrial processes. Non-MSW is not defined, but in the context of this data is any waste sent to a solid waste facility for disposal that is not MSW.