



Minnesota
Pollution
Control
Agency

Greenhouse Gas Reduction through Solid Waste Management

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Historically, the state of Minnesota has measured its solid waste management successes in waste reduction efforts, recycling and composting rates, and tons sent to waste-to-energy facilities. A new currency for measuring success has emerged with the start of the climate change crisis, and with it, a tremendous opportunity for advancing the efficiency and effectiveness of the state's solid waste system.

Advanced management of solid waste has enormous potential for greenhouse gas reduction, measured in metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalents (MtCO₂e), and measuring success in this way continues to support the 1980 Waste Management Act's solid waste management hierarchy (Minn. Stat. 115A.02). In fact, this approach provides additional direction by focusing efforts on specific materials and waste management methods.

The Minnesota Climate Change Advisory Group

In April 2007, Minnesota's Next Generation Energy Act prompted the formation of the Minnesota Climate Change Advisory Group (MCCAG), a 56-member group of stakeholders that prepared a report of recommendations to the Governor and legislature in February 2008 for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. MCCAG identified, through its consensus-based process, that how waste is managed can have a significant impact on greenhouse gas emissions. In fact, front-end waste management methods, which include waste reduction, recycling, and composting, were ranked third in potential

for reduction of greenhouse gases out of 31 recommendations that were quantified. Reducing emissions through advanced end-of-life waste management methods, including waste-to-energy and landfill gas-to-energy, was ranked tenth. MCCAG set a goal for the Minnesota solid waste management system to achieve a cumulative 75 million MtCO₂e emissions reduction in greenhouse gases by 2025.

Solid Waste Stakeholder Process

In response to the recommendations coming out of the MCCAG, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) committed to setting up a stakeholder process that would develop the elements of an implementation plan to reach the MCCAG goals, initially focusing on the densely populated areas of Minnesota. The process began in December 2008 and will consist of approximately seven monthly meetings of a diverse 18-member work group, facilitated by the Minnesota Environmental Initiative (MEI).

Members of the group include representatives from environmental groups, waste haulers, recyclers, utilities, and local governments as well as the state. The process is expected to be completed in June 2009, with a report to the MPCA Commissioner. Although the group will focus on more populated areas of the state, it is anticipated that the resulting plan will have statewide implications as well.

The MPCA has committed to considering the recommendations coming out of the process as it:

- determines priorities for technical and financial assistance
- implements existing programs and develops new ones
- modifies rules
- proposes legislative changes

For more information

If you would like more information about MPCA's Stakeholder Process, visit MEI's Web site at: www.mn-ei.org or call the MPCA at 651-296-6300 or toll-free at 800-657-3864. TDD users can call either 651-282-5332 or the toll-free number for assistance.