



Metropolitan Solid Waste Management Policy Plan 2016 – 2036

Nearly two-thirds of what is thrown away in Minnesota could be reduced, reused, recycled, or composted. If the current trends continue, nearly eight million tons of additional waste will be sent to landfills over the next 20 years. Much has been done to improve waste management in the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area (TCMA); however, innovative solutions and significant system changes are necessary to continue to protect human health and the environment. This is the overarching message of the new Metropolitan Solid Waste Management Policy Plan (Plan), adopted in 2017 by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA).

The Plan

Stakeholders in the Metropolitan Area include producers and sellers of products, waste generators, waste industry, and government.

- **Sets aggressive objectives for waste reduction, recycling, and organics recovery** – 75% combined recycling and organics recovery (consistent with state law) and 5% reduction of waste by 2030 – because they are important components of the solid waste system to improve public health, reduce our reliance on landfills, conserve energy and natural resources, and reduce pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.
- **Emphasizes the importance of organics management (preventing wasted food and increasing the recovery of food waste and other organic materials)** in order to maximize environmental benefits and achieve the 75% combined recycling and organics objective.
- **Fosters forward-thinking approaches** by introducing the concept of Sustainable Materials Management (a new approach to solid waste management, which focuses on the best use and management of materials and increasing the longevity of products) and by proposing a new approach to evaluating emerging technologies that will ensure timely, efficient, and environmentally beneficial decisions are made.
- **Promotes regional coordination** in order to meet solid waste objectives and gain efficiencies through economies of scale, and to promote consistency in solid waste programs.
- **Maximizes existing resource recovery capacity** in conjunction with waste reduction, recycling, and organics recovery to achieve the objectives.
- **Establishes the need for collecting better data**, with a particular emphasis on data gaps (e.g. construction, demolition, and industrial waste) to allow for a proper evaluation of the system before future policy decisions are made.
- **Emphasizes accountability** among all stakeholders responsible for solid waste management in the region.
- **Provides specific, actionable strategies to help counties achieve the objectives** of the Plan while allowing individual counties to choose the methods most appropriate for them.

Accomplishments and challenges

Since 1980, the TCMA has increased its recycling rate to 49% from only 14%, and accomplished other notable improvements to its solid waste management system. This is a significant achievement we should be proud of; however, nearly two-thirds of what is thrown away in the trash could be reduced, reused, recycled, or composted.

The current challenge facing the TCMA is how to continue to develop the solid waste system, given that:

- TCMA municipal solid waste generation continues to grow, and the region's solid waste diversion efforts currently in place will need to be more robust to meet the goals set out in state law.
- Traditional recycling rates have decreased slightly since 2008.
- The Legislature established a 75% combined recycling and organics goal for the TCMA, so system changes must occur throughout the region to achieve the new objective.

Goals and policies

The goals of the plan are to:

- Protect the environment and public health, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and conserve energy and natural resources.
- Manage waste in an integrated system to minimize landfilling.
- Manage waste cost-effectively and internalize future costs to minimize long-term financial liability and maximize environmental benefits.
- Share responsibility and costs for environmentally sound management of waste.

The Plan's policies guide actions and decisions on solid waste management in the TCMA.

Metropolitan System Plan

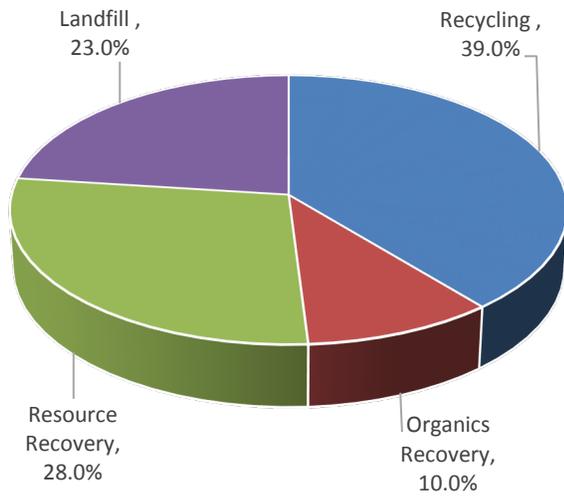
The Plan's Metropolitan System Plan describes broad regional objectives and potential strategies necessary for solid waste programs and services that counties can select from to meet the region's needs for the next 20 years.

System objectives maximize the upper end of the hierarchy, set objectives for every five years for source reduction, recycling, and organics recovery; utilize existing resource recovery facility capacity; and minimize land disposal.

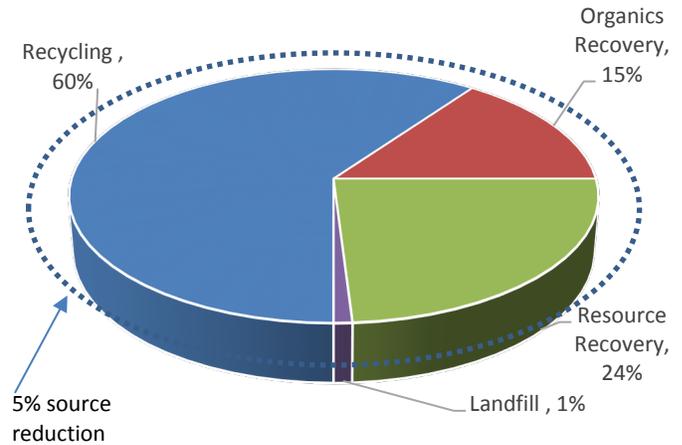
The source reduction objective, based on projected waste generation, ranges from a cumulative 1.5% by 2020 to 5% by 2036. The recycling objective ranges from 51% in 2020 to 60% in 2036; and the organics recovery objective ranges from 12% in 2020 to 15% in 2036.

Achieving the source reduction objection leaves fewer tons of material to be managed by recycling, organics recovery, resource recovery, and landfill. If the source reduction objective is achieved, the statutorily mandated 75% combined recycling and organics recovery goals are met, and existing resource recovery capacity is utilized, the region would send only 1% of waste to landfills in 2036.

Existing (2015)



Objectives (2036)



Additional benefits

Achieving the objectives in the Plan will provide significant economic and environmental benefits in addition to maximizing landfill abatement.

Previous studies have demonstrated that reuse, repair, recycling, and organics recovery provide significant economic benefits throughout the state. In 2014, the recycling, reuse, rental, and repair sectors of the economy generated an estimated \$26 billion in total estimated gross economic activity and employed approximately 138,000 people in direct and downstream jobs. The composting industry in Minnesota was responsible for \$148 million in total estimated gross economic activity and employed approximately 700 people in direct and downstream jobs in 2013.

Achieving the system objectives in this Plan will also have a direct effect on achieving the state’s environmental and energy goals since moving waste up the hierarchy reduces environmental impacts. In the year 2036 alone, reaching the system objectives would:

- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions by over three million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent, equal to taking over one million vehicles off the road for an entire year.
- Conserve over 18 million BTUs of energy.

For more information

The Plan also includes review criteria, including those for solid waste facility permits, certificates of need, and county certification reports.

For more information on the Metropolitan Solid Waste Management Policy Plan, call Johanna Kertesz at 651-757-2489 or Peder Sandhei 651-757-2688, toll-free at 800-657-3864, or look online for a copy of the Plan: <http://www.pca.state.mn.us/waste/metropolitan-solid-waste-management-policy-plan>.