

Modernize Minnesota’s recycling and composting infrastructure

Funding will reduce waste and save Minnesota communities money

Challenge

Recycling and composting infrastructure across Minnesota is reaching a breaking point. Aging facilities can no longer meet the needs of the growing communities they serve. As a result, more waste ends up in expensive landfills, costing Minnesotans money and creating future legacy pollution challenges. The cost of some projects have increased significantly, partly due to unanticipated global issues affecting construction costs and in some cases specific local issues.



By improving statewide composting infrastructure and upgrading waste management facilities, Minnesota can reduce the amount of costly, polluting waste we put in the ground.

Proposal

The proposed \$49 million bonding appropriation is needed to modernize Minnesota’s statewide composting and recycling infrastructure to reduce reliance on costly, pollution-causing landfills. These updates will generate revenue for counties through the value of collected recyclables. In addition, they will create jobs, reduce landfill costs, and prevent harmful climate impacts.

Project*	Location	Request
Organics Capacity	Statewide	\$12,000,000
Solid Waste Management	Pope/Douglas Counties	\$12,833,000
Household Hazardous Waste	Dakota/Scott Counties	\$8,000,000
Solid Waste Management	Olmsted County	\$10,000,000
Solid Waste Management	Polk County	\$2,400,000
Household Hazardous Waste	Chisago County	\$281,000
Household Hazardous Waste	Cass County	\$3,500,000

**Projects ranked in order of priority*

Organics Capacity (\$12 million)

Currently, only about 20% of Minnesotans have access to curbside organics recycling. This request is to expand organics infrastructure in the state by assisting local governments in constructing or expanding capacity for food rescue, composting, and anaerobic digestion, and improving transfer capacity for organics statewide. If funded, MPCA would host a competitive process for applicants to apply for funding.

Pope Douglas County Solid Waste Management: \$12.8 million

The Pope Douglas County Material Recovery Facility is outdated and undersized, originally designed to process 1/3 of the amount of waste it currently handles. The facility is in the process of a two-phase update to meet the growing need of the community by expanding building capacity and improving efficiency through new technology. Phase I of the project was funded in 2020. This phase will add space for advanced processing equipment to increase the amount of recycled materials that can be processed.

Scott and Dakota Counties: \$8 million

Dakota and Scott counties' two facilities manage almost 7 million pounds of material per year from more than 80,000 residents. Dakota County's facility currently handles four times the amount of waste it was originally designed to process, and Scott County's program is projected to grow 325% by 2030. The two counties are partnering on a regional, 24,000 square-foot household hazardous waste and recycling facility to manage waste from residents and businesses of both counties. Phase I of the project (land acquisition, design, and engineering) was funded by the 2020 bonding bill. This Phase II request will construct and equip the new regional household hazardous waste collection and recycling facility.

Olmsted County: \$10 million

Non-combustible waste like glass and metal reduces efficiencies at the Olmsted County Waste-to-Energy facility that serves Dodge and Olmsted counties. To improve operations at the waste-to-energy facility, Olmsted County is seeking to build a regional materials recovery facility (MRF) that will reclaim non-combustible items that can be recycled rather than being burned.

Currently, there is no regional MRF serving southeastern Minnesota. A regional MRF will promote innovation and collaboration and be responsive to the region's recycling needs.

Polk County: \$2.4 million

Polk County owns and operates an integrated waste management system that is used by seven counties and three Tribal Nations. The request is for new equipment, including Artificial Intelligence technology and robotics that will identify more recyclables and improve efficiency at the Polk County MRF, which is anticipated to increase recycling rates for each of the counties that use the facility by 7% to 12%.

Chisago County: \$281,000

The Chisago County Household Hazardous Waste Facility (HHW) regionally serves Chisago, Washington, and Isanti counties. This facility has processed more than 4 million pounds of HHW materials over the last 20 years. However, the existing facility is unable to meet demand. This request is for expansion to accommodate warehouse workflow, volume and safety improvements

Cass County: \$3.5 million

Cass County's transfer station near Pine River is the main hub for two satellite transfer stations in the county and services the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe. A feasibility report was performed in 2020 that

recommended replacing the station's 30-year-old HHW facility with a new building to house personnel facilities, HHW, reuse, and recycling operations all under one roof.

The request is for a new recycling, HHW and office building, which will improve efficiency and access for local businesses and residents.

Why it's important

Treating waste as a resource is good for both our economy and environment. Recycling creates jobs: approximately 37,000 jobs in our state are directly or indirectly supported by the industry. These jobs pay almost \$2 billion in wages and add nearly \$8.5 billion to Minnesota's economy annually.

Putting waste in landfills is the least desirable disposal method for Minnesota solid waste. By diverting usable material like recyclables from landfills, we slow the creation of landfills that we must manage.

The collected recyclable materials support Minnesota industries in creating new products and jobs. In addition, energy and steam produced from waste at resource-recovery facilities — instead of landfills — is used by local communities.

Landfills, on the other hand, must be monitored and managed in perpetuity, even after they stop receiving new waste. Closed landfills produce contaminated fluids (leachate) and methane gas that must be contained and disposed of properly.

For more information

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