

Michigan's Residential Recycling Plan

Governor Rick Snyder
April 14, 2014



Department of
Environmental Quality
PURE MICHIGAN

PROPOSED PLAN OF ACTION ON RECYCLING

April 14, 2014

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THE ISSUE

In 1976, when Michigan adopted its “bottle deposit law,” the country recognized Michigan as a leader in environmental stewardship. In addition to controlling litter, the bottle bill initially gave the state a head start on residential recycling. However, even with the success of the bottle bill, Michigan has since fallen behind. Despite many calls for improving waste utilization, Michigan’s recycling participation rate remains the lowest in the Great Lakes region - and is one of the lowest in the nation.

Only 25 of Michigan’s counties provide convenient access to residential recycling opportunities. A lack of access, as well as weak markets for recycled commodities, is a lost environmental and economic opportunity. Studies estimate that over \$435 million annually of paper, metal, glass, plastic, and other valuable materials are disposed of in landfills. Recycling and reusing of waste products generates economic investment, jobs, and savings for the state: residents benefit, businesses benefit, and the environment benefits.

WHAT WE HAVE DONE SO FAR

Charged in the November 2012 Special Message on Energy and the Environment to develop a statewide comprehensive recycling plan, the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) initiated discussions on recycling with conservation groups, waste service providers, recycling experts, retailers and grocers, and local governments. Discussions focused on what drove successful programs.

Significant consistencies emerged. Participants agreed that Michigan needs to measure recycling efforts, educate consumers on how and why to recycle, grow recycling markets and business, and ensure consumers have convenient access to recycling opportunities. Stakeholders also recognized the need to adequately fund these activities.

A Draft Recommended Approach for Comprehensive Recycling in Michigan was presented in September 2013 to over 45 stakeholder and interest groups as a starting point to initiate discussions. The document identified a viable path to achieving comprehensive recycling, and acknowledged alternatives as options. Subcommittees were formed to vet specific aspects of the recommended approach while the larger group continued to meet to discuss goals and concepts. On February 13, 2014, the MDEQ presented their Proposed Plan of Action on Recycling.



RECOMMENDED RECYCLING PLAN

The MDEQ's plan of action to increase the state's municipal solid waste recycling rate includes both short-term and long-term components. The MDEQ recognizes that becoming a recycling leader will take a long-term commitment; however, several actions can be taken immediately with some modest resource investment. To reach longer-term objectives, additional effort, funding, and legislative changes will be necessary in subsequent years.

Components of a statewide comprehensive residential recycling program include:

- Reliable measurement, tracking and reporting system
- Leverage existing education, outreach, and technical assistance programs
- Convenient access to recycling opportunities
- Active market development and innovation support
- Up-to-date county solid waste planning process
- Continued state-level leadership

I. Proposed Metrics and Goals:

- Increase the number of counties with convenient access to residential recycling to:
 - 2015 — 29 counties
 - 2016 — 45 counties
 - 2017 — 83 counties
- Increase statewide participation in recycling to above the Great Lakes states average by December 2017.

II. Plan of Action:

a. Benchmark and Measure Progress

Michigan lacks reliable and comprehensive data on recycling activity. Collecting, analyzing, and reporting on the amount and type of material recycled, access to recycling options and residential participation rates will be critical to evaluating progress.

- Partner with waste handlers to collect baseline data and invest in a Web-based data collection system.
- Pursue data reporting from all material recovery facilities on par with landfill operators.

b. Educate and Provide Technical Assistance

All successful recycling programs point to robust education and outreach campaigns as a necessary tool to increase recycling participation. Local communities should have access to technical assistance to help build their programs. In addition, model Michigan recycling programs can offer their expertise and mentor those local units of government initiating new or expanding programs. The state can learn from the success of others and leapfrog to modern processes and technologies.

- Realign department resources and designate a coordinator to oversee education and outreach, and to provide technical assistance and expertise to local waste management programs.



- Leverage community education campaigns provided by statewide and national nonprofit organizations. Many of these programs also showcase public-private partnerships that identify recycling commodity markets. Examples include the Michigan Recycling Coalition, Curbside Value Partnership, and Keep America Beautiful.
- Mentor local communities by sharing best practices and leading examples through presentations and outreach at conferences, such as at the annual gatherings for the Michigan Recycling Coalition, the Michigan Municipal League, the Michigan Association of Counties, the Michigan Association of Regions, the Michigan Townships Association, and others.
- Lead by example and initiate conversations with other state departments to review the waste management practices for state office buildings and properties for potential improvements in recycling and waste utilization.

c. Stimulate Investment, Encourage Regional Collaboration, and Increase Convenient Access to Recycling

The county solid waste planning process has stalled over the past several years. By providing incentives and encouraging regional partnerships, the state can engage locals directly in increasing recycling participation, access, and waste utilization and improve accountability.

- Provide access to Economic Vitality Incentive Program/County Incentive Program grants if eligible communities demonstrate an increase in recycling access and participation. Encourage regional solutions by rewarding counties that partner with regional organizations and other governmental units.
- Provide incentive grants to those local units of government adopting local ordinances or contractually requiring waste haulers to provide curbside recycling. Also, continue discussions with local units of government about requiring waste haulers operating in Michigan to include curbside recycling.

d. Develop Markets and Support Innovation

Leaders invest in strong market development programs. By providing opportunities to both the supply and the demand side of the recycling industry, markets will develop, and demand will increase for both recycling and recycled commodities. A market development program should have two components: technology transfer and business development. Through collaboration with partners, such as the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC), the state can jumpstart these networks.

- Hold a Governor's Summit on Recycling to highlight both the economic and environmental opportunities from increased recycling, to connect market participants, and to encourage technical innovation.
- Encourage investment in waste utilization facilities by enabling the use of tax-exempt, private-activity bonds.
- Create a directory that identifies potential buyers for recycled commodities to assist local community recycling programs in defraying operational costs.
- Engage partners in market development and innovation.



e. Sustain the Commitment: Governor's Council on Recycling

- After tackling the first step of increasing access and participation in residential recycling, the next step will be to address systematic incentives to increase waste utilization activity. Maintaining momentum will require continued engagement by the state, the waste industry, and local units of government. By appointing a gubernatorial council to focus on longer-term policies and goals, progress on a statewide comprehensive program will continue.
- Establish a two year Governor's Council on Recycling to oversee progress on statewide recycling goals. Members will represent all facets of the recycling chain and the Council will report recommendations to the MDEQ Director.
- Explore the idea to require waste haulers operating in Michigan to offer recycling options.
- Invigorate the county solid waste management planning process and integrate waste utilization planning into county plans.

III. Strategic Investment in FY 2015

- For FY 2015, Governor Snyder recommended in his Budget Proposal an additional \$1 million and an additional three FTE positions.
- FY 2015 Recommendation for a \$1 million appropriation by the legislature will authorize 3.0 FTEs to bolster state level oversight of recycling technical assistance, solid waste planning, recycling measurement, education and outreach, market development, and grant administration.
- The MDEQ is redirecting existing Community P2 Funds from escheated bottle deposit revenues for recycling grants.





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