

DEQ Stakeholder Recycling Initiative  
Measurement and Goals Subcommittee  
November 14, 2013

**Discussion Summary and Findings**

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The Measurement and Goals Subcommittee met with two objectives:

- 1) Recommend long term and short term goals for recycling in Michigan
- 2) Identify how to measure recycling and track progress.

**GOALS**

The subcommittee divided the goals into three parts:

- 1) Access
- 2) Participation
- 3) Tonnage

Access: The current Solid Waste Policy sets the goal of 100 percent convenient access to residential recycling options by 2012. The subcommittee agreed the goal of 100 percent convenient access is appropriate however the date should be adjusted. The subcommittee did not define “convenient” but seeks to discuss potential definitions at a later date. One potential definition is:

*Convenient access to curbside recycling available to residents in housing units of 4 units or less:*

*Collection occurs at least every 14 days and collects at least five recycled materials (for example, newspaper, office paper, mixed paper, #1 plastic, #2 plastic, #3-#7 plastic, clear glass, colored glass, aluminum, steel, food waste.) Residents in communities with less than 10,000 residents have access to at least one drop-off per 10,000 people in the county.*

The concept of population density was also discussed. An alternative approach would be to define “convenient” as curbside for residents in communities with a population density of 300 residents per square mile and drop-off recycling for residents in communities of less than 300 residents per square mile.

Participation: The subcommittee recognized that access is not the only goal that will drive success. Encouraging participation in available programs will lead to increased recycling rates. As a place holder the subcommittee identified a 50% participation rate as an appropriate starting goal, recognizing data is not readily available to identify current participation rates. Additional work needs to be done to identify current participation rates in existing recycling programs to establish an appropriate benchmark.

Tonnage: The subcommittee agreed that the current goal of 50% utilization of municipal solid waste is a good goal to start with but the current target date of 2015 will need to be adjusted. The subcommittee agreed that the tonnage goal should be a Utilization goal rather than a Recycling goal, recognizing that the purpose of the goal is to achieve an increase in the amount of waste used for a purpose, rather than disposed.

Proposed goals, as a starting point for discussion could look something like the following:

2017 - 100% convenient access to residential recycling opportunities

2018 - 50% participation in available recycling opportunities

2020 – 50% multifamily recycling access on site

2020 – 50% utilization of Municipal Solid Waste

## **MEASUREMENT**

The subcommittee identified the need to track various data sources to be able to monitor progress toward achieving the identified goals. Mirroring the goals, the following data should be collected:

- Residential Access
- Participation
- Tonnage of Material Utilized

The subcommittee also recognized the need to track cost data to be able to drive the collection, transportation, and processing systems toward those that are most cost efficient.

In areas where immediate legislative amendments are not crucial, the subcommittee encouraged the DEQ to begin collecting recycling data immediately. DEQ staff is best positioned, with the addition of increased funding and staffing resources, to collect access, participation, and cost data from communities and counties. The subcommittee recognized that the most accurate and complete data about access, participation, and cost would come from a mandatory reporting requirement, however it was recognized that funding to communities to collect and submit the data to the State would be necessary.

Regarding tonnage data, the subcommittee supported the concept of legislative changes to require facilities that process waste for utilization to report data annually. These facilities include material recovery facilities, compost facilities, anaerobic digesters, and possibly scrap yards.

The subcommittee discussed the importance of electronic data submittal, placing emphasis on the ability to keep certain data confidential while achieving the objective of tracking progress toward the utilization goal. A representative from Emerge Knowledge, the vendor of Re-TRAC, a recycling data tracking software, made a presentation to the group. The representative described in detail the various tools available to states and communities using the software.

The subcommittee identified the following issues in need of more discussion and follow-up:

- 1) Define “convenient” access.
- 2) Establish an appropriate participation rate benchmark.
- 3) Define “utilization”.
- 4) Decide specific goals and dates.
- 5) Identify which utilization facilities will be mandated to report data (e.g. scrap yards).
- 6) Choose a data reporting software (e.g. Re-TRAC)
- 7) Implement statutory changes to establish a recycling data reporting requirement.
- 8) Identify an annual cost to the State of Michigan to implement data reporting and management.