

WASTE BYTES!

Newsletter of the Maine State Planning Office, Waste Management and Recycling Program

L.D. 810 Update

In each issue of *Waste Bytes*, we generally attempt to describe what is happening in Augusta that concerns recycling and solid waste programs. In the Legislature, there are proposed bills or LR's (Legislative References) that Legislators' use to present their ideas. come out before the session.

The number of actual bills or LD's (Legislative Documents) will be much smaller as similar subjects and issues are matched or crafted into single bills, and along the way, some issues are taken care of with another strategy altogether. Among the other strategies are the topics investigated by task forces, study groups, or perhaps agencies. Before this session got under way, there were several topics of interest to folks in the solid waste and recycling field being worked on by the Legislature, SPO, and the DEP.

Among these were actions contained within LD 810, "An Act to Improve Solid Waste Management Programs". This bill, among other tasks, required that the Department of Environmental Protection and State Planning Office "develop a system by which solid waste management activities are performed by them", which led to a report that proposes a consolidation of state solid waste programs at the Maine DEP.

Under the plan, it is proposed that the state-owned solid waste disposal facility ownership and oversight function, as well as the associated capacity planning, remain at SPO, and that other solid waste planning, policy, education/ outreach, technical assistance, and data functions be transferred to the DEP. The report was delivered to the Natural Resources Committee in the early days of the session and is waiting for its consideration. For a copy of the report, visit <http://www.maine.gov/spo/index>



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MATCHING FUNDS AVAILABLE FOR EDUCATION AND OUTREACH!!

Attention: Maine Municipal Recycling Programs

Do you need help educating residents about your local recycling program? Have you seen, or considered using, the downloadable resources available in the 'Maine Recycles' Toolkit?

Now for a limited time, SPO is offering matching funds to help with recycling education and outreach and to promote toolkit use. Individual municipalities and regional programs are eligible. Deadline is March 27, 2009. Here is more [information](#) and a copy of the [application](#). Or visit

<http://www.maine.gov/spo/recycle/index.htm>

For more information contact Jetta Antonakos, 287-9074 or jetta.antonakos@maine.gov

Bills! Bills! Bills!

L.D. 351 An Act Regarding the Regulation of Agricultural Composting Operations would require commercial operations to register with the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Resources. This would remove agricultural composting from DEP but would not exempt operations from environmental laws.

L.D. 367 An Act to Reduce the Amount of Plastic Introduced into the Waste Stream would require consumers to pay 10 cents for each plastic bag they use from a retailer. DEP would receive these funds monthly for deposit into the Waste Reduction and Recycling Loan Fund, administered by FAME.



L.D. 506 An Act to Protect Public Safety and Provide for the prudent Use of Landfill Capacity would restrict the weight of trucks hauling trash to any state-owned landfill, as well as call for further capacity reports and further defining waste stream movement within the state as well inter-state. Proposed reports are scheduled throughout 2009.

L.D. 536 An Act to Enhance Maine's Electronic Waste Recycling Law revisits the e-waste laws and adds desktop printers and video game consoles to the collection list while clarifying that digital picture screens are subject to the same controls as monitors. Reporting procedures and responsibilities of the electronic manufacturers are revised as well.



Cluster (or Apartment) Recycling

We often refer to Maine as being a rural state, and as such there has been little attention paid to apartment house recycling. With a population of a little more than 1.3 million, the number of housing units reported in the 2000 Census was 691,132. Of these 691,132 separate housing units, 20.3 percent were in multi-unit structures. There are apartments in Maine and, yes, perhaps they present a challenge to recycling programs.

When the City of Portland, Maine wanted to increase its recycling rate after single sort arrived, multi-unit (more than 4 units) buildings were added to the curbside collection routes. Tenants could obtain plastic bins to place their recyclables into, for curbside collection. The Cities of Lewiston and Auburn inform residents that curbside collection is available to residents living in structures of 4 or less units. The magic number in these cities seems to be "4". If we re-visit the Census, we find that about 14% of the units, or almost 96,000 structures, have 4 units or less.

Apartment dwelling isn't always characterized by exact figures though. Quite often in Maine, and especially with apartments, these units are described as 'quaint' or 'having character'. The former three unit building now, however, may have six or seven apartments. The farm house that typifies "big house, little house, back house, barn" may even actually be at least five apartments. This observation identifies a basic problem; the structure was not originally built as an apartment building. Even with a spirit to recycle, there may be several unintended barriers for residents who want to recycle.

Barriers may include but are not limited to such things as: the uniquely shaped rooms carved out of some other intended living space, no elevators, or no storage – for pantry goods or spent packaging.

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Is it worth it to capture this material? If anyone has been paying attention to the Maine Recycles Campaign, they would know that the primary focus has been on the younger person, 19 to 35 years old, who may be too busy to recycle. The individual or couples living in apartments are generally young, often with limited finances. Maybe the resident is working at two or more jobs. Maybe they are conscientious but find it easier or more convenient to be making pilgrimages to the dumpster out back then trying to deliver their recyclables to the silver bullet or the transfer station. Not many apartments provide recycling opportunities for their tenants. Maybe, just maybe, we should highlight the apartment dweller and see what we could do to help this audience with recycling – a few more silver bullets or maybe a corner recycling kiosk? It is something to think about anyway. Hats off to those with their forward-thinking already!

**Hello Out There! Time to get the Word Out!**

Someone let it slip that we are in a recession. What does that mean? Is it ‘business as usual’? Or do we have to respond in a different way? We say that the infrastructure for successful recycling is in place, and we should adopt the “Can Do” posture. Something doesn’t seem right – but what? A year ago, the recycling industry was earning high prices for their materials and a few of the (forgive me) “old timers” or (no let’s say our own “sages”) first commended everyone for the work that they had done in the last couple of decades to almost create markets for their products. They then expressed amazement for the success achieved in the prices that had come forth.

We almost have to remind ourselves now that a short time ago, we had to acknowledge success in everything except selling the public on the fact that recycling could not go forward without the participation of the public – that everyone in the general public, and not just a few committed to our environment, to make recycling a truer success.

Following the 2007 Maine Resource Recovery Association Annual Conference, and using a public poll conducted through the SPO, the MRRRA ‘Allstar’ team met in Waterville. They formed a committee after recognizing that what had to be done now was to ‘sell’ recycling to our individual communities. We didn’t have to change anything but we did have to make everyone believe in where the State of Maine was, and where we were going, and, by George, what we could achieve. The next step was to determine the best method to ‘re-sell’ recycling.

Maine isn’t Never-Never Land. The State of Maine was, and continues, on a course to accomplish what is needed in Recycling to achieve our goals. To identify, and energize, the necessary role to be played by the public for municipalities, business, institutions, and the state - and maybe even set an example for the country. A year ago we said that we had the infrastructure and acknowledged that we could reach everyone; however we had to sell our plan and example for what recycling needs to accomplish.

We explored the Community Based Social Marketing (CBSM) concept and seemed to have embraced “Green” marketing, as part of the re-invigorated recycling outreach effort. The bottom line is that we do have to get the word out and the path is clear – we have to consistently remind, encourage and cajole our public to the importance and value of recycling. Let’s work towards our goals and shoot to improve!

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We need to now unite and turn to our municipalities and say “First listen to what we are saying” and then help them “do”.

We acknowledge that there is a campaign – the Maine Recycles Campaign. There are members of the public that have understood that even though the media has told them that the markets have dropped and demand has disappeared. Now they ask why they should recycle.

What is needed is to provide the answers and to focus on our ‘We recycle for our communities and to reduce our waste costs’. We recycle for our environment and for the quality of life now and for future generations. We recycle to save natural resources. We recycle to conserve water and energy. We are stewards of the planet and need to not only understand that, but to take positive actions to full that charge.

Nothing has changed??? Wrong!! We still have to promote what has been done, what is being done, and inform them as to what remains to be done.

Need some ideas? Need some help? Check out the ‘Maine Recycles’ toolkit grant program, on the front page of this newsletter.



Mark Your Calendars!!!!

Maine Resource Recovery Association

16th Annual Solid Waste Conference

Scheduled for
Bar Harbor on May 4th & 5th.

It is not too early to sign up as vendor, member or attendee. For details and more information, please visit the MRRA web site - www.mrra.net.

Hope to see you there!!!!



