

NEWAC

Northeast Waste Advisory Council
201 South 3rd Avenue West
Virginia, Minnesota 55792
1-800-450-9278
218-749-0650 Fax



A partnership with the counties of Aitkin, Carlton, Cook, Itasca, Koochiching, Lake, and St. Louis, and the Western Lake Superior Sanitary District.

September 9, 2022

Call to Order: Chair Nelson called the NEWAC meeting to order at the Virginia Government Services Center Liz Prebich Conference Room; Virginia, Minnesota.

Present: *Brian Napstad* - Aitkin County; Heather Cunningham (via WebEx) – Carlton County; *David Mills* (via WebEx), Cook County; *Leo Trunt*, Brett Skyles, Dan Swenson – Itasca County; Matthew Gouin (via WebEx), *Peter Walsh* (via WebEx) – Lake County; *Keith Nelson*, Dave Fink, Diane Hildreth, Steve Pellinen, John Strukel - St. Louis County; *Jim Aird*, Dan Belden, Brandon Kohlts, Tim Lundell, and *Paul Thomsen* (via WebEx) - Western Lake Superior Sanitary District (WLSSD); Eric Clapper (via WebEx), Bob Craggs, Jack Ezell – Burns & McDonnell; Danielle Drussell, Tim Farnan (via WebEx), Rick Patraw, and Heidi Ringhofer (via WebEx) – Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA)

***names in italics indicate voting members*

Approval of NEWAC Minutes – May 27, 2022: Upon motion by Commissioner Trunt and second by Commissioner Napstad the minutes of the May 27, 2022, meeting were approved as presented.

Current Business:

Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) Updates – Rick Patraw introduced himself to the group. Patraw is the new MPCA Environmental Sustainability Section Manager.

Danielle Drussell gave a NE Regional Plan Project Timeline handout and went over the timelines with the group. Drussell stated that the final working draft due date for submittal of the Regional Plan to the MPCA is October 13, 2022. MPCA staff have six months to review the Plan and will review and work with the NEWAC to make any revisions through January 2023. February 2023 NEWAC board members will need to give their acceptance of the Plan contents before the Plan goes out for public notice on March 1, 2023. Counties will need to pass individual Board Resolutions prior to approving the Plan not prior to the public notice. Drussell stated that all the MPCA needs from individual Counties is that they have reviewed the Plan, know the contents of the Plan, and they are supporting the contents of the Plan. After the public notice period, the MPCA will need Board Resolutions to adopt the Plan. The public notice period will be 30 days and MPCA staff will need to respond to any public comments received during this time. The official due date is April 13, 2023. The end date of the grant agreement is May 31, 2023. Invoicing the MPCA can happen after this date, however the work plan activities related to this grant need to be completed by May 31, 2023. Final grant reporting will need to be sent to the MPCA by June 2023. Discussion from the group followed.

Bob Craggs from Burns & McDonnell updated the group on the Northeast Minnesota Regional Plan. Craggs gave a PowerPoint presentation and discussed the objectives of today’s meeting, proposed timelines and action items. Craggs opened the discussion by reviewing Source Reduction and Education. Craggs briefly discussed ways to initiate a food insecurity and waste prevention “campaign” collaborating with tribal communities, appoint a task force, develop grant application(s) to secure funding and initiate a program. Discussion followed. Chair Nelson stated that there are seventeen different tribal communities within the city of Duluth and would like to know if there is a way to acknowledge the urban native population and see if there are monies available to provide resources for urban communities. Craggs will follow up on this information.

Craggs continued the discussion with the recycling section of the proposed programs. Craggs stated that the NEWAC will solicit proposals to retain a contractor to provide recycling technical assistance to local

governments to create incentives for additional materials diversion, improve cost-effectiveness, and foster sustainable partnerships with private sector providers. NEWAC will explore funding for this initiative based on the proportional population of the respective counties/District. The initial funding will be approximately \$50,000 to pilot a program. This will maximize diversion and build upon the program changes.

Craggs continued to describe how to improve recycling programs through establishing a “Recycle Right” education campaign and purchase recycling carts for residential curbside recycling collection programs. Discussion followed on the process of applying for funding from The Recycling Partnership (TRP)— the largest recycling non-profit in the United States that offers both technical assistance and financial resources to local governments to improve recycling programs. The group also discussed inviting a TRP representative to a future NEWAC meeting.

The next recycling proposed initiative Craggs talked about was to consider retrofitting the St. Louis County materials recovery facility (MRF) to create a state-of-the-art multi-stream processing facility with increased capacity to handle the region’s residential and commercial recyclable materials. Discussion on developing grant applications, secure funding, design, construction and operations to be able to serve multiple counties followed. Craggs spoke about the Closed Loop grant program to help fund the design and construction of the MRF retrofit and other funding options independent of what is available through the MPCA.

Craggs moved forward with the presentation to discuss the development of a regional recovered materials marketing cooperative and an end markets economic development initiative by partnering with the Arrowhead Regional Development Commission (ARDC). Craggs stated that the mission of the ARDC is to provide local units of government and citizen groups within the seven county Northeast Minnesota Region with a means to work cooperatively to identify needs, solve problems and foster local leadership. Craggs stated that he received feedback from ARDC yesterday, confirming their interest in partnering with NEWAC to assist with grant writing/grant applications, establishing a regional materials waste exchange and broker the sale of recovered recyclable materials for improved pricing. Discussion from the group followed.

Craggs moved forward with the presentation to discuss upgrading the existing publicly owned transfer stations to accept and consolidate commingled recyclable materials for long haul to the St. Louis County retrofitted MFR or an alternative cost-competitive, commingled materials processing facility. Craggs stated that upgrading materials handling capabilities at public transfer stations will improve program efficiencies by reducing hauling costs. There are a number of MPCA Capital Assistance Program (CAP) grants available.

The next topic Craggs talked about was end markets and establishing a partnership with ST Paper and Tissue in Duluth to accept targeted sorted office paper from the NE Region as feedstock for manufacturing new tissue, paper towels, and related products. WLSSD staff will reach out to the local ST Paper materials procurement officer to discuss the potential to accept additional sorted office paper directly from the region in late 2023 and early 2024. Craggs also talked about establish a partnership with Package Corporation of America (PCA) in International Falls to accept office paper from the NE MN Region as feedstock for manufacturing writing paper and associated products. Koochiching County staff will reach out to the local PCA materials procurement officer to discuss the potential to accept additional recyclable fiber directly from the region in late 2023 and early 2024. The concept is to develop long term relationships and work with local haulers, local entities, and local communities. Discussion followed.

Craggs continued the presentation and discussed another Regional Program Initiative – Organics. Craggs briefly described the retrofit of WLSSD’s existing wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) anaerobic digester to co-digest food waste and WWTP by-products. The retrofit will include the installation of additional engine generators and a high strength waste receiving facility. WLSSD has procured the funding for the three engine generators and has awarded the contract for installation to begin the Fall of 2022 with the commissioning of the equipment in early 2024. Operation of the new equipment and facility would begin in 2028.

The next recycling proposed initiative Craggs talked about was to consider implementing targeted collection of sources separated organic materials (SSOM) along the State Highway 61 corridor in Lake and Cook Counties and directing these materials to WLSSD for composting or co-digestion. Discussion followed. This initiative will require the creation of a joint advisory committee between Lake and Cook counties which will be tasked with formulating a pilot program to collect SSOM from select customers along the corridor and transport to the WLSSD's composting facility. The joint advisory committee will be created in 2024 with the pilot program beginning in 2025. Discussion followed on the costs of transporting materials to WLSSD versus processing the materials within Cook/Lake County. Craggs skipped to the create a regional technical assistance program to foster the development of SSOM drop-sites section of the presentation and stated that in the less populated counties within the region, co-composting of SSOM at current community yard waste sites is encouraged and counties would continue to work with the MPCA to have site facilities align with local interests. Commissioner Mills emphasized that the statement "and directing these materials to WLSSD for composting" would like it changed in the draft plan to say utilize a technical assistance program and process the SSOM within Cook County. Craggs stated that he will change the wording in the Draft Plan to options. Discussion on the impact of tourism and the short seasons in the Cook/Lake counties followed.

Craggs continued the presentation and talked about the recycling proposed initiative to initiate SSOM collection from targeted generators in St. Louis County, transport these materials to the WLSSD for composting or co-digestion, and backhauling commercial recyclable materials to the St. Louis County MRF. WLSSD will consider structuring a cooperative arrangement where WLSSD directs recyclable materials to the St. Louis County MRF for processing in exchange, St. Louis County will initiate collection of SSOM from targeted generators and transport to WLSSD for composting or co-digestion. The proposed collaborative approach would leverage the assets of the two entities and increase materials diversion. WLSSD and St. Louis County would begin planning discussions in 2024 to develop the terms of the cooperative agreement by 2026.

At this point the group took a five-minute recess. Nelson called the meeting to order and Craggs resumed the presentation and provided clarity on the SSOM drop sites for the region. The less populated counties he spoke about include Aitkin, Cook, Itasca, Koochiching and Lake and the discussion was to build on the successes of the drop-off sites and to encourage the co-composting at current community composting sites. Craggs emphasized that there is an interest to broaden the collection of materials to be composted and the rules for SSOM have been revised to encourage a broader collection of materials and more drop-off sites are being developed as a result of this. Craggs mentioned that MPCA staff member Tim Farnan would be a great resource for better understanding how this can be done.

Craggs focused the next segment of the discussion on collaborating with the Natural Resources and Research Institute (NRRI) of the University of Minnesota-Duluth to conduct research to identify sustainable end markets for wood wastes and organics through its Materials and Bioeconomy Platform.

The next recycling proposed initiative Craggs talked about was MSW disposal. Craggs stated the proposed Draft Plan recommends the formation of public/private partnerships to permit, design, and develop MSW disposal facilities within the NE region. The participating counties/District envision the need for two MSW disposal facilities to serve the Northeast Region because of the region's large geographical size and the need to reduce overall hauling distances and costs. The permitting, design and construction process would begin in 2025 and the MSW landfill facility(s) to become operational in 2030. The MSW landfill permitting process includes solid waste design and operating, environmental review and certificate of need. Discussion on the definition of an industrial landfill followed.

The next topic Craggs talked about was to work cooperatively to competitively procure MSW disposal agreement(s) to serve the region while new MSW facilities are being permitted, designed, and constructed. These agreements would be structured to serve the region's disposal needs in the interim while additional disposal capacity is being permitted within the region. Some of the NE Minnesota region counties may elect

to individually continue with current disposal arrangements until the new MSW landfill facilities are operational and economically competitive. It is currently projected that the Superior Landfill will close in the 2025-2026 timeframe. Representatives from WLSSD, Carlton County, Lake County, Cook County will form a joint task force in 2023, with WLSSD to take the lead to begin developing an approach to procure needed cost competitive MSW regional disposal or continue working independently until MSW landfill disposal capacity is available in the region. Craggs stated that it is critical to move down both pathways in parallel to make a determination what is best for each participating county/District.

Lastly, Craggs discussed the construction and demolition materials recovery portion of the proposed Draft Plan. Develop a region-wide C&D materials reuse and recovery program. This initiative would build upon the current C&D materials management programs by researching model ordinances incentivizing deconstruction and reuse, enacting municipal ordinances where feasible, and exploring the partnering with large commercial contractors to encourage reuse and recovery. In 2023, NEWAC would appoint a regional advisory committee, composed of public and private industry representatives, to develop a workplan to undertake the applicable research and identify the technical resources needed for local governments to incentivize C&D materials reuse and recovery. The funding for this initiative would be addressed through individual counties/District solid waste program budgets. Craggs concluded the presentation.

Danielle Drussell reminded the group that a lot of the programs discussed are contingent on getting grant funding and she wanted to make sure everyone realizes that grants are not guaranteed. Counties and the District need to continue discussions on where the funding comes from for these programs in the event you do not receive a grant.

At this time, Craggs recommended the group set up another meeting in the near future. This would give the group an opportunity to review the Draft Plan and suggest changes before the October 13th Draft Plan due date. Drussell concurred that everyone needs to be onboard and supportive of the programs in the Draft Plan before it gets submitted to the MPCA. Discussion followed. The consensus was to bring the Draft Plan back to respective County/District staff and submit written comments to: Robert Craggs, Burns & McDonnell at rwcraggs@burnsmcd.com by Friday, September 23rd. A tentative meeting date has been set for Monday, October 3rd.

Items by Counties and WLSSD:

Itasca County – Staff have been making improvements to their local transfer stations and added additional items that can be accepted at their sites, conducting community clean-up days, will be accepting used residential tires for free for the next week and working on a new transfer site south of Grand Rapids.

St. Louis County - The demonstration leachate research project is under way. Fink presented the initial results at the SWANA Conference. The County Board has given the directive to the Environmental Services Department to close three or four canister sites⁴ sites and consolidated services by spring 2023.

WLSSD - A contract has been signed with Carlson Timber Products to operate the transfer station for WLSSD. The contractor is currently removing clean pallets and scrap metal from the garbage before it gets hauled to the Superior Landfill.

Scheduling Next Meeting: A tentative NEWAC meeting will be scheduled October 3rd.

Adjourn: Upon motion by Commissioner Napstad and supported by Commissioner Trunt the meeting was adjourned.