

Working Stakeholder Meeting on “Sustainable Materials Management in Central Maine” June 11th, 2015

SUMMARY OF KEY OUTCOMES

Introduction

The Senator George J. Mitchell Center for Sustainability Solutions at the University of Maine has organized an interdisciplinary team of researchers with a wide array of expertise related to solid waste. Together we seek to engage with stakeholders throughout the state to identify and alleviate information gaps, provide opportunities for dialogue and to participate in the process of designing and building support for more sustainable materials management solutions in Maine. In response to stakeholder interest, the Mitchell Center is organizing a series of regional meetings this spring designed to bring together diverse stakeholders in each region to identify regionally-appropriate opportunities and needs. On June 11th five members of the Mitchell Center team travelled to Bowdoin College where we met with more than 30 local stakeholders representing municipalities, waste operators, waste haulers, institutional waste generators, regional entities, wastewater treatment operators, waste-to-energy facilities, composters, environmental activists, e-waste recyclers, and educators.

What should the future of materials management in Central Maine look like? (listed in order of greatest consensus)

- We will have less waste to landfill, i.e. work towards “zero waste”
- We will follow the waste hierarchy and capture all organics
- We will require closed loop systems and mandate manufacture for recovery at a state or national level
- We will have a more educated public through better engagement and have more responsibility taken by households
- We will have cost effective and convenient waste systems
- We will understand the real costs of disposal and will no longer externalize the cost of waste disposal to the future
- We will have regional cooperation to improve planning and transportation efficiencies
- We will utilize multiple solutions on multiple scales, understand what is working elsewhere for managing the various waste streams
- There will no longer be cheap disposal options, “race to the bottom”
- We will have a comprehensive state plan so that private businesses can make secure investments

What opportunities exist in Central Maine to help achieve this vision?

- Establish a long term vision with incremental steps. (A master plan)
- Opportunity for regional cooperation (goals, needs and directives)
 - Central Maine has strong community of committed professionals
- Huge opportunity now to move forward with organics (mandate?)
 - Beneficial economically for all parties (WTE, LANDFILL) to get out of waste stream
- Empower/encourage ENR to research best practices
- Develop a “solid waste authority” – to inform decision making process, composed of diverse membership; credible/trusted
 - Some group to act as convener (SPO reinvented, COG system?)
- Multiple options for recovery disposal in the C. Maine region both public and private
- Central Maine has good population and geographical density making cooperation on transportation and infrastructure more favorable; also good for networking and exchange of best practices
- Opportunity to gather funding for programs with environmental tax/base tipping fees without exemptions

What needs and barriers must be addressed in order to make progress?

- We need better incentives, support for cooperation: move beyond fragmentation
 - Positive and negative, link cost to behavior
- We need clear, concise, forward thinking policy
- We need culture change
- We need data, full cost accounting, understanding of current state
- We need to address odor for organics
- We need money/funding to run programs
- We need regulation
- We need resources for education
- We need better technology for small/rural populations

Are there emerging goals or programs that should be pursued?

- Foster networking, education and communication among regional professionals
 - Experience sharing and meeting
- Think about how to create a separate authority
- Obtain funding to evaluate best practices
 - Look at places geographically and climatically similar to Maine!
- Partner with GOGs/DCs/PCs
- Create purposeful outcomes through these regional meetings