

Working Stakeholder Meeting on “Sustainable Materials and Waste Management in Western Maine”

June 2nd, 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 2nd four members of the Mitchell Center team travelled to Farmington where we met with more than 20 local stakeholders representing municipalities, waste operators, waste haulers, institutional waste generators, education and regulators.

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

- We'll have better solutions for distance/transportation (3)
- Citizens will be educated/engaged (3 tables)
- We'll have models that support/encourage recycling, composting (resource recovery) (2)
- We'll have less volatility in material markets, companies potentially funding diversion (2)
- The solutions will recognize multiple needs (schools, hospitals, families) and address them equitably (2)
- Lots of small scale pilot programs, so we'll know what works
- Regional programs will not have disappeared, there will be incentives (once again) to cooperate
- We'll have better ways to deal with the changing waste stream
- We'll have solutions for creators of “challenging waste” – (eg hospitals/hazardous waste)
- We'll have lots of volunteers and more engaged citizens
- We'll have better incentives for recycling , or simple systems

What is needed to achieve the envisioned future?

- Cost effective, public-private partnerships
- Good “best-practice” models (nationally and within Maine)
- More data about disposal, recycling, reuse rates to make better policy decisions
- Support (funding/data/technology/space) for composting/organics
- Resources for education new programs (online, graphic signs/brochures... a new model)
- Better incentives to achieve the waste hierarchy

- Need to anticipate and address any potential unintended consequences of specific policies (PAYT and others)

What opportunities exist in Western Maine to achieve the envisioned future?

- Define how much to reduce and reuse – look at per capita trash generation to identify targets
- Map of facilities for “odd” materials
- Provide/create education platform for info because “paper” doesn’t work – get help from universities to develop
- Fee – fund balers/compactors to reduce transport cost and pay back subsidize remote communities
- Successful examples to build on: carpets, tires, sustainable campus coalitions, composting

Given our discussions today, what are some emerging goals to pursue?

- Better define amount that is recycled, more data and research
- Figure out how to incorporate reduction and reuse in diversion goal
- Develop education programs and better define reduce and recycle to move forward
- Assess life cycle costs of various products – such as certain types of plastics