

“The Future of Materials Management in Maine”

Statewide Stakeholder Engagement, May-July 2015

Compiled Outcomes Report

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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 and materials management. Together we seek to engage stakeholders in the process of developing more sustainable materials and waste management solutions for our state. We began this process early in 2015, by outlining our understanding of problems and challenges we face, as well as the criteria by which Maine citizens and stakeholders might evaluate potential solutions in a report entitled [“Solid Waste Management in Maine: Past, Present and Future”](#). Stakeholders throughout the state were invited to comment on the report and to attend a February meeting in Augusta to discuss the future of materials and solid waste management.

In response to stakeholder interests expressed at that initial meeting, the Mitchell Center subsequently organized a series of regional meetings that brought together diverse stakeholders to identify shared visions as well as regionally specific needs and potential solutions. Five regional meetings were held across the state. The regions loosely reflect areas with shared waste and materials disposal or consolidation opportunities. The meetings were hosted in Presque Isle, Bangor, Farmington, Brunswick, and Portland with the support of local organizing committees composed of key stakeholders from the region [Appendix I]. These highly productive meetings drew together waste management professionals (landfill, waste-to-energy and composting operators, haulers, recyclers, engineers, reuse organizations, consultants, and transfer station operators) with city, town, and regional representatives, tribal nations, community institutions, citizen action-groups, students and academics to discuss the future of materials management in Maine. Over 130 individuals, representing more than 90 entities participated [see Appendix I]. The meetings demonstrated the wealth of knowledge and skills available in Maine to design more sustainable waste and materials management solutions.

During each regional meeting stakeholders were asked to: 1) imagine what the future of waste management *should* look like, 2) to identify barriers and needs that must be addressed to achieve these visions, and 3) to think about emerging goals and opportunities for moving in the right direction. This document compiles these stakeholder insights. Readers can find detailed outcomes in the pages following the executive summary and in the regional outcomes documents [Appendices II – VI]. Here we provide a high level summary which highlights five primary themes that cut across all the regional meetings. While the expression of these themes varied with different stakeholder groups and geography, the themes demonstrate areas of significant statewide consensus. We suggest that the following five shared visions (in bold) and the corresponding needs and goals necessary to achieve them (bulleted points), might provide a starting point for the development of more specific and sustainable materials and solid waste management policies and programs in Maine.

In the future, Maine will have significantly reduced waste, increased recovery in support of our waste hierarchy, and moved towards a closed loop economy:

- Achievement of the waste hierarchy will require investment in and support for diversion programs and technologies, organics diversion represents a significant opportunity.
- We will need strong policy leadership to provide direction and incentives for removing organics and other recoverable materials from the waste stream.
- We need reliable markets for recovered materials, in Maine and beyond our borders.
- Federal or state policy will need to discourage products with unrecoverable packaging or ensure that producers are responsible for the management of these materials.
- The externalization of costs will need to be addressed to ensure that the pricing of all products and disposal options accurately reflect the true, long-term costs of disposal.

In the future Maine's citizens will be more engaged in materials management:

- Education is essential to help all Mainers (households, legislators, municipal leaders) understand the true costs of waste. Waste will need to be reframed as materials and resources.
- The right incentives must be in place to ensure that awareness translates into behavior and that costs are linked to behaviors - so that all Mainers become engaged partners.
- Mainers will be more engaged in waste and materials management if we can balance convenience (e.g. curbside) with an incentivized responsibility (e.g. source separation).

Maine will have more efficient and cooperative waste management systems, able to capitalize on materials to achieve greater economic development on multiple scales.

- Municipalities and private entities will share a vision and be incentivized to cooperate on a regional basis – reducing transportation costs, redundancies and inefficiencies.
- Maine-based, value-added, reuse businesses will make use of many of the materials recovered in Maine while simultaneously contributing to local and state-level economic development.

In the future Maine will have a comprehensive “forward-thinking” materials management plan with coordinated goals and incentives to encourage their realization. The plan will also allow flexibility for regionally appropriate variation.

- Achieving state level goals will require multiple solutions in various sectors.
- Long-term state planning and goals will reduce uncertainty and allow private businesses to make secure long-term investments and develop new markets.
- State level plans should be comprehensive rather than piecemeal and should “have teeth” to ensure their realization.

Decisions about materials and waste management will be based on reliable and timely data and will build upon understandings of “best practices” proven effective in similar locales.

- Comprehensive data on waste and materials management practices (e.g. waste characterization studies, life-cycle analyses, social impact assessments) are necessary, we need full cost accounting of current and projected solutions.
- Pilot programs are important to test potential alternatives.
- A comprehensive database of “best practices” in Maine and in other states can help to consolidate data on alternatives.