

Wisconsin Council on Recycling Meeting Notes

Friday, September 5, 2025

DNR, 101 S Webster St, Madison, WI and via Teams

Council Members Present: John Anderson, David Keeling, Marty Oxman, David Pellitteri, Mark Walter, Jerry DeMers, Jarrod Holter

DNR: Jennifer Semrau, Kate Strom Hirons, Sarah Murray, Andrea Keller, Jennifer Feyerherm, Bart Sponseller, Lauren Hill

Public: Antoinette Smith, Resource Recycling; Megan Moore, Association of Plastic Recyclers; Megan Quinn, Waste Dive; Kristine Heise, Amcor; Karen Bandhauer and John Hite, The Recycling Partnership; Julie Ketchum, WM; Amanda Haffele, Portage County; Kevin Belida, Dane County; Kathy Hutter, Winnebago County; William Frazier, American Forest and Products Association.

Note- due to the call-in/virtual ability to join the meeting, some participants may not be properly identified above; omissions or errors are not intentional.

Agenda Item	Notes
Call to Order	Meeting called to order at 10:03 a.m.
Introductions and Announcements	Council members and DNR staff liaison to council introduced themselves. Mark Walter, Council chair, reminded council members to take required training (Ethics for Public Officials and WI Public Records Law 2025).
Approval of Minutes (June 2025)	Motion made by John Anderson and seconded by Jerry DeMers to approve the minutes of June 6, 2025. Motion carried (7-0).
DNR/Legislative Updates	<p><i>Jennifer Semrau, DNR</i> informed the council of various DNR staffing updates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Departure- Ruth O'Donnell, Organics Waste Management Specialist (WMS) retired 8/15• New- Erik Flesch new Organics WMS<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Was working with the DNR since October 2024 as the Nonmetallic Mining Reclamation Program Specialist◦ Erik will further introduce himself and provide Food Waste & Organics Updates at future meetings• Solid Waste Engineer – Entry or Senior level– deadline for applications was 8/4. Selected candidate could be located in Eau Claire, Fitchburg, or Green Bay.• Agency is in a hiring “frost” until we know more solid information on the federal budget and impacts to the DNR.• Unknown when E-cycle Coordinator, Complaints Coordinator, Recycling and Solid Waste Reporting Specialist and other vacancies will be filled <p><i>J. Semrau, DNR</i> informed the council of various Waste and Materials Management (WMM) program updates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recycling Grant application period- open now through 10/1 for max funding (deadline of 10/30 for partial funding)• Recycling Excellence Awards nomination period now through 9/15<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Communities, businesses, schools, non-profits all eligible◦ Nominate another or self-nominate

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Award categories: Overall Program, Projects & Initiatives, Special Events, Innovation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Winners announced near 11/15 (America Recycles Day) • MyWisconsinID will replace WAMS IDs for reporting access • State Budget- no changes in recycling grant amounts; WMM program did lose 6 FTEs which were vacant. • Federal Budget- monitoring closely. As mentioned above, waiting on outcome of federal budget (fiscal year ends 9/30). WMM and DNR receive federal funding and need to understand what those amounts will be going forward. • Kate Strom Hiorns just began serving as the SWANA rep for the International Solid Waste Association's Recycling and Waste Minimization Workgroup. Plans to share what is learned with SWANA Badger Chapter board. <p>J. Semrau, DNR informed the council of grant updates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solid Waste Infrastructure for Recycling (SWIFR) Grant (from US EPA, ~\$550,000)- work continuing. No change in appropriation. • Battery Grant (from U. S. Department of Energy (DOE, ~\$1.6M)- no updates if project will proceed. <p>J. Semrau, DNR informed the council of various legislative/rulemaking updates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recycling rule revision became effective July 1. DNR held a webinar for RUs in July (recording, slides and guidance documents at https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/Recycling/RU.html) and a held a MRF stakeholder meeting on August 26 (recording, slides and guidance documents saved at https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/Recycling/MRF.html). Additional resources for haulers coming this fall. Jennifer will provide a full presentation on the recycling rule revision changes and roll-out at a future meeting. • <u>Landfill rule</u>: Goes into effect Oct. 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Staff have developed resources to provide more information about the changes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Updates to Wisconsin's Landfill Design and Operations Administrative Code ▪ Updates to Wisconsin Solid Waste Management Fees Administrative Code ▪ Full text of rule changes ○ If you have questions about the new rule (either general or for a specific landfill), you can submit them using our landfill rule form. DNR staff will use these to put together additional resources and will respond to case-specific questions directly. ○ More info will be presented at SWIP (see below). • Non-landfill rule: in drafting stage. More info will be presented at Solid Waste Interested Parties (SWIP) meeting. • E-cycle rule: in drafting stage • Hazardous Waste rules: adding aerosol cans as universal waste is in effect. More on this later in the agenda. <p>J. Semrau, DNR informed the council of various upcoming meetings:</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solid Waste Interested Parties (SWIP), 9/23 930-12 Via Teams <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Agenda includes 2024 recycling data and recycling updates, WMM program updates and financial report, updates on recycling & landfill rule implementation, draft language for transfer station rule revisions, food waste management evaluation results, update on landfill/recycling industry fires. ◦ Go to Solid Waste Interested Parties Wisconsin DNR for agenda and to register. • WI Towns Association Annual Convention 10/13, Wisconsin Dells <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Recycling Rule Revision presentations ◦ Sessions 2:30-3:30 and 3:45-4:45 • WMM Study Group 11/6 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Agenda TBD, likely virtual via Teams
<p>Film and Flexibles Coalition</p> <p>Slides</p>	<p><i>Karen Bandhauer and John Hite, The Recycling Partnership</i> introduced themselves to the council. K. Bandhauer provided background information on The Recycling Partnership (TRP). TRP started by providing cart grants to communities to increase recycling access. However, the realization that it would take 150 years to provide enough carts/access lead TRP to Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) work. J. Hite gave an overview of EPR. The CalFLEX initiative is the result of the EPR law in California. Seven states have passed EPR for packaging legislation with California and Minnesota putting more pressure on film and flexibles. CA's EPR law requires packaging be 100% reusable, recyclable or compostable by 2032. CA has stringent standards for what constitutes recycling: 60% access, 60% of MRFs accept, MRFs send to "responsible end market." CA is the fourth largest economy in the world. Presently, 34% of U.S. plastic packaging is film and flexibles, which only 2% of U.S. households can recycle and there are limited end markets for MRFs. There are 47 projects across the U.S. valued at \$14 million addressing film and flexible packaging.</p> <p>Q: Heard it cost 20 times more to collect/process plastic film than it's worth.</p> <p>A: Economics overall are not great; EPR fees help with economics by contributing funds for infrastructure. The CA mandate is a game changer. Manufacturers want to be able to sell their products and that packaging has to be recyclable. Likely to see more mono layer material versus multi-layer. J. Semrau added that back of house film collection (shrink wrap) is a common practice large retail outlets have also been doing for a long time (without a mandate) so it must be more economically advantageous to recycle it versus landfill it.</p> <p>Q: Will we see more paper bags if plastic bags have more challenges? WI has strong paper industry.</p> <p>A: May see some material shifting.</p> <p>Q: Who is the producer? Company who makes the bag or Lay's? (potato chips)</p> <p>A: Usually the brand owner (Lay's owned by Pepsi). In cases with no brand owner, the producer. Can also be the importer (for imported goods).</p>
<p>Recycled Commodity Markets and the Impacts of Tariffs</p>	<p><i>Megan Quinn, Waste Dive</i> presented on how tariffs are shaping the waste and recycling industry to the council (link to slides at left). Tariff news changes almost daily. Recyclers, traders and businesses still in "wait and see" mode. Consumer spending/confidence plays a role. Based on box usage (Amazon) consumer confidence is not the greatest. Tariffs are adding to other seasonal</p>

<p><u>Slides</u> (How tariffs are shaping the waste and recycling industry, Megan Quinn, <i>Waste Dive</i>)</p> <p><u>Slides</u> (Recycled commodities update, Antoinette Smith, <i>Resource Recycling</i>)</p> <p>Wisconsin Recycled Commodity Markets</p>	<p>market effects for certain commodities. Paper mills planning for tariff impacts for months. There has been mill consolidation, closings and re-balancing of outputs. Since 2018, Section 232 has placed tariffs on aluminum and steel, but they went from 25% to 50%- expense which will be passed to consumers. Most imported aluminum in from Canada. Tariffs on equipment and fleet also impact the industry. These purchases have long lead times. They just recovered from COVID backlog and now dealing with tariffs.</p> <p>Antoinette Smith, Resource Recycling provided a recycled commodities update to the council. Fiber pricing is down, along with containerboard production and capacity. The dockworker strike, while only three days long, tanked the market. Aluminum prices are softening. HDPE natural saw a record high in March but has crashed since. PETE is the lowest price since 2018. HDPE color hit record lows in July/August as the tubing for the agriculture market is down. It isn't uncommon for plastics pricing to drop in July after the run up to summer and a glut of generation. Asian sources of PETE imports up 7% coming to U.S. (versus China). In July, Malaysia shut off imports from non-Basel convention countries (U.S.). Republic Services announced a new plastics plant for 2027 in Pennsylvania. Economic cool down expected to be more pronounced in Q4 and Q1 2026. Also questions on the reliability of U.S. federal economic data.</p>
<p>Aerosol Cans as Universal Waste & Vapes Guidance Updates</p> <p><u>Slides</u></p>	<p>Andrea Keller, DNR provided the council a brief report (due to time) on the new ability to manage aerosol cans as universal waste (link to complete slide deck at left). Universal wastes are hazardous wastes that can be managed protectively under reduced regulations. Some aerosol cans may be hazardous wastes.</p> <p>Q: How should haulers communicate to residents/commercial entities?</p> <p>A: Educate clients. Businesses need to assess wastes and manage hazardous wastes appropriately. Households are exempt (may place materials in the trash) but encouraged to use household hazardous waste (HHW) facilities, where available.</p> <p>A. Keller will be invited back to the December meeting for a full presentation. David Keeling suggested more discussion should be had on recycling empty aerosol cans versus HHW or trash. M. Walter indicated the Tri-County MRF does not take aerosol cans and does not puncture aerosol cans at the Brown County HHW facility. D. Keeling also questioned the application of RCRA empty and MRF segregation. Also discuss vapes guidance in December. A. Keller stated guidance in development and public comment solicitation will be shared with J. Semrau when available.</p>
<p>Battery Legislative Discussion</p>	<p>No discussion. Still waiting for legislation to be finalized.</p>
<p>Public Comment</p>	<p>No comments.</p>
<p>Other Business/Next Meeting/Topics/Location</p>	<p>Next meeting will be December 5, 2025 (virtual).</p>
<p>Adjourn</p>	<p>Motion to adjourn made by David Keeling, seconded by Jerry DeMers. Motion carried 7-0. Meeting adjourned at 12:08 p.m.</p>