

Zero Waste and Recycling Interim Study Committee

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Zero Waste and Recycling Interim Study Committee

Committee Charge

The Zero Waste and Recycling Interim Study Committee was formed to study waste and recycling infrastructure, composting, and public awareness of moving toward zero waste in Colorado pursuant to Interim Committee Request Letter 2019-02. In conducting its study, the Zero Waste and Recycling Interim Study Committee consulted with the Colorado Department of Agriculture (CDA), the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE), the Governor's Office of Economic Development and International Trade (OEDIT), and other private and nonprofit entities concerned with waste and recycling in Colorado.

Committee Activities

During the 2019 interim, the Zero Waste and Recycling Interim Study Committee held four meetings and took two field trips. The committee met with representatives from both the public and private sectors who are involved in recycling, waste management, composting, end markets for recyclables, carbon sequestration, and soil health.

Overview of zero waste and recycling. The committee heard a presentation from the National Conference of State Legislatures on zero waste and recycling polices around the country and recent legislation in other states on the topic. CDPHE, the Department of Personnel and Administration, and OEDIT provided information to the committee on how these departments are addressing zero waste and recycling in Colorado. Legislative Council Staff presented to the committee on recycling and zero waste programs around the country, as well as state programs related to waste management, recycling, and composting.

Waste management. The committee heard presentations from a variety of Colorado communities, including Logan and Pitkin Counties and the city and county of Denver, to learn about waste management and landfill operations across the state. The committee also toured landfills in Lamar and Granada and met with local officials in those communities to learn more about the challenges of waste management in rural Colorado, such as landfill tipping fees, space constraints, and illegal dumping.

Recycling. Representatives from Eco-Cycle, the city and county of Denver, and Loveland provided the committee with information about recycling policies and programs. A representative from AMP Robotics presented to the committee on how the company is creating robotics to sort recycling materials. Representatives from Waste Management and Rocky Mountain Recycling, Inc. presented to the committee on recycling from a business perspective. The committee learned about recycling in both the agriculture and construction sectors from representatives in those fields. Additionally, the committee heard a presentation from representatives from the Colorado School of Mines and National Renewable Energy Laboratory about the various projects and partnerships those entities are collaborating on to address recycling and zero waste.

The committee learned more about the various types of recycling facilities in the state by touring the following recycling facilities: the Boulder County Recycling Center, the Center for Hard to Recycle Materials, Clean Valley Recycling, Roots Recycling, and the Southeast and East Central Recycling Association.

Composting. The committee heard a presentation from Eco-Cycle on what kind of policies this organization believes can increase composting rates in Colorado. The committee also heard a presentation from A1 Organics about the benefits of composting. A1 Organics also discussed the differences between commercial composting and agriculture composting, the costs and benefits of composting in agriculture, and about possible changes to the tax code to increase the use of compost as fertilizer in the state.

End markets. The committee learned about end markets for recyclables from a number of presenters, including representatives from the Colorado NextCycle Program, Eco-Cycle, Momentum Recycling, and the South Carolina Department of Commerce. The committee learned how new products are being made out of recycled materials by touring Applegate Insulation, EVRAZ Rocky Mountain Steel, Momentum Recycling, and Owens-Illinois Glass Manufacturing. Bill A addresses the study, development, expansion, and promotion of market mechanisms for the furthering development of recycling.

Carbon sequestration. The committee heard a presentation from a research associate at the Colorado State University on carbon sequestration and reducing trace gases in Colorado agriculture. He discussed managing the carbon cycle and the carbon footprint of agriculture operations. He also presented on removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and storing it in the Earth by composting, promoting minimum tillage, using cover crops, and reducing the use of synthetic fertilizers.

Soil health. The committee heard presentations that addressed soil health from organizations including A1 Organics and Mad Agriculture. The committee also received an update from CDA about the department's role in soil health. Bill B addresses the development of a statewide organics management plan to promote compost use.

Committee Recommendations

As a result of committee discussion and deliberation, the Zero Waste and Recycling Interim Study Committee recommends the following two bills for consideration in the 2020 legislative session.

Bill A – Incentivize Development Recycling End Markets. Bill A creates a number of incentives and strategies to promote recycling and to develop recycling end markets. It requires the Pollution Prevention Advisory Board (advisory board) in consultation with a broad range of stakeholders to recommend to the CDPHE a structure and governing guidance for a recycling market development center (center). The purpose of the center is to support the development of end-market businesses in the state by providing research and analysis of existing markets, identifying potential business development and funding opportunities, and integrating its efforts with the State Solid Waste Plan. The advisory board is required to report on its recommendations to the General Assembly's committees with jurisdiction over solid waste by July 1, 2021.

Under the bill, the CDPHE is required to conduct a literature review of current practices and the feasibility of requiring producers to design, manage, and finance programs for end-of-life management of their products and packaging as a condition of sale. The CDPHE is required to report on its findings to the General Assembly's committees with jurisdiction over solid waste by July 1, 2021.

In consultation with the Pollution Prevention Advisory Board Assistance Committee, the advisory board is required to develop a formula for reimbursing locally assessed personal property taxes for businesses that reclaim or recycle recyclable materials. Businesses in the Front Range may be reimbursed from the Front Range Waste Diversion Cash Fund, while other businesses may be reimbursed from the Recycling Resources Economic Opportunity Fund.

Finally, beginning October 1, 2020, the CDPHE is required to administer a statewide recycling education campaign. The CDPHE is required to consult with local governments and private agencies that operate recycling programs, in administering the program. The CDPHE may contract with one or more public or private entities in preparation of campaign materials.

Bill B – Develop a Statewide Organics Management Plan. Bill B requires the CDPHE and the CDA to develop an organics management plan to study and make recommendations on organic waste management practices to encourage compost use on Colorado soil to promote carbon storage. The departments are required to work with a diverse group of stakeholders and include certain components specified in the bill. The CDPHE may incorporate its existing work regarding organics management in the plan. The departments are required to report on the plan to the General Assembly by February 1, 2023.