

# **FINAL REPORT**

## **SOLID WASTE REDUCTION AND RECYCLING STUDY COMMITTEE**

Presented to the Legislative Council  
and the Iowa General Assembly  
January 1997

Prepared by the Legislative Service Bureau



Legislative  
Service  
Bureau

# FINAL REPORT

## Solid Waste Reduction and Recycling Study Committee

January 1997

### MEMBERS

Senator Patrick Deluhery,  
Co-chairperson  
Senator Bill Fink  
Senator Mary Lundby

Representative Clyde Bradley,  
Co-chairperson  
Representative Bob Brunkhorst  
Representative Cecelia Burnett

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### AUTHORIZATION AND APPOINTMENT

The Solid Waste and Reduction Recycling Study Committee was established by the Legislative Council for the 1996 Interim to "Conduct a comprehensive review of the goals, regulation, reporting, and status of statewide efforts to reduce and recycle solid waste. The review shall include, but not be limited to, evaluations of the effectiveness of curbside and drop-off recycling programs, composting facilities, unit-based pricing programs, materials recovery facilities, and solid waste processors or end-users of recovered materials. The review shall also consider the economic development potential for the recycling and reuse of solid waste and the coordination of interagency efforts to achieve cost-effective and environmentally sound statewide solid waste management."



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### **1. Overview.**

In 1989, the Waste Volume Reduction and Recycling Act (Chapter 455D of the Iowa Code) was enacted which, in part, provides waste volume reduction goals for the state. The goals established are to reduce the waste stream existing as of July 1, 1988 by 25 percent by July 1, 1994 and by 50 percent by July 1, 2000. To assist in attaining these goals, Iowa law also provides for the imposition and use of a state solid waste tonnage fee. This tonnage fee, which is an amount imposed on each ton of solid waste collected by a sanitary landfill for disposal, is collected and remitted to the state (the Department of Natural Resources) for the uses prescribed by law. The uses of the fee include activities to assist in attaining the waste reduction goals of the state, including developing and implementing demonstration projects for landfill alternatives and other initiatives. The state tonnage fee required to be collected by a sanitary landfill is in addition to any over tipping fee which a sanitary landfill imposes to defray the costs of operation.

The Solid Waste Reduction and Recycling Study Committee was established following the 1996 Session of the General Assembly during which queries were made regarding the status of local solid waste planning areas in reaching the solid waste reduction goals. House Concurrent Resolution 127, co-sponsored by Representatives Bradley and Branstad, requested that the Legislative Council establish an interim study committee to study issues relating to solid waste reduction and recycling. The Legislative Council did establish the study committee based upon the substance of the resolution.

Information provided to the committee by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) indicates that 35 of the 47 solid waste planning areas have met the 25 percent goal to date. The final set of subsequent solid waste management plans due in January 1997 will provide a more comprehensive and current assessment of additional progress made in reaching the reduction goals.

The Study Committee meeting held on Monday, November 18, 1996, focused on the status of the various waste volume reduction and recycling programs in Iowa which have been established to assist planning areas in reaching the established goals, the requirements of the waste volume reduction and recycling law in Iowa, and recommendations for the future.

### **2. Committee Proceedings.**

The Legislative Council authorized one meeting day for the Study Committee, which was held on November 18, 1996.

The presentations and discussions of the meeting of November 18, 1996, are summarized as follows:

a. **DNR Overview.** Ms. Teresa Hay, Administrator, Waste Management Assistance Division, Department of Natural Resources, provided an overview of the current waste volume reduction and recycling program in Iowa. She provided information regarding the designation of solid waste planning areas, the number and

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identities of planning areas which have and have not met the established 25 percent reduction goals, and discussed future plans and programs for assisting planning areas in meeting the goals.

**b. Agency Cooperation.** Ms. Margo Underwood, Recycle Iowa, discussed the objectives of Recycle Iowa, a cooperative effort between the Iowa Department of Economic Development and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. Ms. Underwood also discussed the activities of Recycle Iowa which include:

- ◇ designing and implementing a formalized tracking system for gathering information on the status and supply and demand of Iowa's recyclable materials;
- ◇ implementing and interpreting statewide waste characterization studies;
- ◇ administering the by-products and waste search service program;
- ◇ administering the buy recycled business alliance;
- ◇ working with the plastics industry to provide educational information and to promote the use of recycled resins in manufacturing;
- ◇ coordinating resources for recycling businesses;
- ◇ providing results of the recycling economic impact study to interested parties to promote waste diversion and recycling market capacity in Iowa industries;
- ◇ working with the recycling and reuse technology transfer center to conduct an analysis of national recycling and reuse economic incentives;
- ◇ implementing and monitoring a recycling market development communications plan;
- ◇ developing methods to encourage and formalize relationships between solid waste planning areas and local government agencies to encourage market development;
- ◇ establishing an Iowa market development advisory committee to review market assessment and waste characterization studies;
- ◇ providing measurement methodology on Recycle Iowa outcomes through the updated and revised project profile and tracking form which reports on employment, capital investment, capacity, utilization, and sales;
- ◇ beginning January 1, 1997, incorporating solid waste planning activities, economic development policy changes, and industry cost savings from landfill diversion and material revenue generation into the project profile and tracking form.

**c. Ombudsman.** Ms. Kristie Hirschman, Assistant for Small Business, Office of the Citizens' Aide/Ombudsman, provided information regarding Iowa's waste reduction and recycling efforts in comparison with the efforts of other states and



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noted the importance of education, marketing, and development of markets in successful efforts.

d. **UNI Center.** Mr. Ed Brown, Recycling and Reuse Technology Transfer Center, University of Northern Iowa, identified the purpose of the Center as one which promotes and supports research, education, and outreach for solid waste reuse and recycling technologies and processes. The Center is located within the College of Natural Sciences at the University of Northern Iowa and works in coordination with other state agencies regarding reuse and recycling efforts. Mr. Brown provided a packet of materials regarding the issues of the economics and usefulness of recycling and reuse.

e. **Private Agency Efforts.** Mr. Jerry Fleagle, Executive Director, Beautify Iowa Recycling Program (BIRP), described his organization as a nonprofit organization which brings together business, industry, private citizens, and governments to establish an integrated approach to recycling efforts. Mr. Fleagle noted that Iowa is viewed as a leader in recycling, that Iowa has a large percentage of curbside recycling, that state recycling education efforts are successful, that litter control must be a part of any recycling and waste reduction effort and that the state should expand education and information efforts in this area, that recycling markets should be encouraged to an even greater extent, and that the business community should be made a larger part of recycling efforts to reach recycling and reduction goals.

f. **League of Cities.** Mr. Jeff Heland, President, Iowa League of Cities, discussed recommendations for change in the existing waste reduction and recycling law. He suggested that substantial reduction has occurred and that additional reduction will call for an additional outlay of resources that outweigh the small return. He recommended that the penalty for not reaching the 25 percent reduction goal be eliminated, that the state tonnage fee be reduced from \$4.25 and that a greater amount of the moneys collected by the state be returned to the local entity, that greater accountability be applied to use of the state tonnage fees, and that more emphasis be placed on pre-use consumer packaging.

g. **Iowa State Association of Counties.** Mr. Bob Mulqueen, Public Policy Analyst, Iowa State Association of Counties, provided introductory remarks to the presentation by representatives of the Iowa Society of Solid Waste Operations. Mr. Mulqueen noted that the Iowa State Association of Counties has worked closely with the Iowa Society of Solid Waste Operations and the Iowa League of Cities in developing and implementing the solid waste management program and that these entities must continuously respond to the challenge of meeting the financial burden associated with a comprehensive solid waste reduction program which must continuously evolve to meet the demands of society.

h. **Solid Waste Operations.** Mr. Thomas Hadden III, Metro Waste Authority, Mr. Randy Hartmann, Great River Regional Waste, and Ms. Kathy Morrison, Scott Area Solid Waste, representatives of the Iowa Society of Solid Waste Operations, provided a report which was compiled based upon the roundtable discussion

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meetings of the Iowa League of Cities, the Iowa State Association of Counties, and the Iowa Society of Solid Waste Operations which were held during the fall of 1996 to establish the 1997 legislative priorities of these entities. The presenters noted that facilities must remain competitive; that penalty fees are not working to meet the 25 percent goal; that waste reduction goals, statewide, have been met, and in the remaining areas differences based on geography, demography, and types of solid waste dictate the extent to which compliance may take place; that at this time tonnage fees might not be being used in the most effective way; that the 50 percent goal should be viewed only as a goal and not as a state mandate; and that more local flexibility is needed.

i. **Regional Councils.** Mr. Doug Elliott, Chairperson, Iowa Association of Regional Councils (IARC), presented the concerns of IARC and of the East Central Iowa Council of Governments (ECICOG) of which Mr. Elliott is the executive director. Mr. Elliott expressed the following concerns: that the 50 percent reduction goal may not be achievable by the year 2000 due to the leveling off of waste abatement efforts; that the 50 percent goal may not be appropriate due to the unique characteristics of state regions which are impacted by geographic location, commerce, and waste flow control; and that state regents institutions are not a part of the comprehensive plans of the regions and do not have the same resources available in meeting the goals.

j. **Private Agency Effort.** Mr. Bob Armstrong, American Recycling Services, Inc., provided information to the Committee regarding his company, which provides assistance in implementing curbside collection programs. Mr. Armstrong recommended that no changes be made in the current solid waste reduction and recycling law and that the 50 percent goal is achievable. He suggested that an increased educational effort is the best means of reaching the goal.

### **3. Committee Discussion and Recommendations.**

Following a roundtable discussion, the Committee unanimously approved the following recommendations:

◆ That the Co-chairpersons, with the assistance of the Legislative Service Bureau, draft a report which includes the points of analysis and recommendations made by the presenters and developed by the Committee during the meeting and to which is attached any information provided to the Committee. The report is to be reviewed by all of the members of the Study Committee prior to finalization and is to be subsequently submitted to the appropriate standing committees for continued review and further action.

◆ That all entities which participated in the meeting are to be commended for their hard work and input.



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### **4. Points of Analysis and Recommendations Made by Participants in the Meeting of the Solid Waste Reduction and Recycling Study Committee.**

a. **Department of Natural Resources.** Ms. Teresa Hay, Administrator, Waste Management Assistance Division, Department of Natural Resources, reviewed the history of the solid waste reduction and recycling law in Iowa and noted the great amount of progress that has been made since the institution of the program in 1988. She addressed the following points and recommendations:

(1) *Waste Reduction Goal.* Ms. Hay encouraged retaining the goal of 50 percent reduction by 2000. She suggested that a solid waste reduction and recycling program must have a long-term strategy and that success can only be measured in the long-term necessitating a goal-based measurement. She noted that if a planning area reaches the 50 percent goal, the planning area may reduce its tonnage fee by 50 cents but that there is no penalty if the goal is not reached. Ms. Hay stated that DNR does consider the overall picture and not just the tons of solid waste in isolation and that each locality chooses the programs implemented in reaching the goal. The baselines used in determining reduction goals have been adjusted to reflect changes such as the use of scales.

(2) *Analysis Methodology.* Ms. Hay noted that the program must use a comprehensive and integrated approach due to geographic and waste type variations. She stated that the program has evolved to include new initiatives and that the methodology used in measurements of reduction provides for consideration of adjustments to the original baseline measurement of solid waste.

(3) *Fee Moneys.* Ms. Hay noted that state tonnage fees which are collected by DNR are returned to planning areas in the form of grants and loans and that 33 of the planning areas would not have projects in place without this assistance due to the greater time required to accumulate the funds. She emphasized that a measurement of solid waste reduction is necessary because the awarding of grants and loans is based upon a local area's success.

(4) *Ongoing Initiatives.* Ms. Hay noted that ongoing, integrated initiatives which involve various agencies such as DNR, the Department of Economic Development, the Department of Education, and others will enhance the possibility of reaching the 50 percent goal. Some of these efforts include increased market development, a composting initiative, increased education efforts including training opportunities for members of the public, and development of programs to handle specific wastes such as construction and demolition waste, foundry sand, and wood waste. Ms. Hay also emphasized the need for continued study to increase the knowledge of the waste stream in Iowa and stated that a waste characteristic study is in progress.

b. **Agency Cooperation.** Ms. Margo Underwood, Director, Recycle Iowa, provided the following comments and recommendations:

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(1) Supported retaining of the 50 percent goal.

(2) Emphasized the need to expand markets for recycled materials.

(3) Noted that 60 percent of the waste in the state is generated by business and industry.

(4) Noted the need for continued study of the state waste stream and for continued education of businesses and industries in Iowa which might benefit from the services provided by Recycle Iowa.

(5) Noted the need for an integrated approach in managing solid waste and encouraging relationships between all entities involved.

c. **Ombudsman.** Ms. Kristie Hirschman, Assistant for Small Business, Office of Citizens' Aide/Ombudsman, proposed the following:

◇ Supported retaining of the 50 percent goal.

◇ Emphasized the need for market development and education.

d. **UNI Center.** Mr. Ed Brown, Recycling and Reuse Technology Transfer Center, University of Northern Iowa, proposed the following:

◇ That the greatest challenge in the area of solid waste reduction and recycling is overcoming the myths of these efforts, which are usually based upon economic concerns.

◇ The need for continued education, research, and transfer of technology in expanding reduction and recycling efforts.

◇ That the focus should be on appropriate reduction and recycling technology for Iowa because funding is never adequate to support all efforts.

e. **Private Agency Effort.** Mr. Jerry Fleagle, Executive Director, Beautify Iowa Recycling Program, proposed the following:

(1) Iowa's recycling and reduction program is moving in the right direction and is a leader in this area.

(2) Curbside recycling should be encouraged and more accessible and numerous recycling opportunities should be available to citizens who will take advantage of these opportunities.

(3) Education efforts should continue to be expanded and coordinated.

(4) Litter control efforts should be enhanced and should include educational and informational efforts.

(5) The recyclables market should be expanded through development of demand for these materials through information and technical assistance, "buy recycled" initiatives, financial assistance, and loans and grants.

(6) Collaboration efforts with the business community to reach recycling goals should be emphasized. Efforts should include education and involvement



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of business and the public in developing a program which is beneficial for both business and consumers.

f. **League of Cities.** Mr. Jeff Heland, President, Iowa League of Cities, proposed the following:

(1) That the penalty for not reaching the 25 percent goal be eliminated. This would include that a region be required to prove that it is working toward waste reduction.

(2) That the state tonnage fee be reduced from \$4.25. This recommendation includes that a greater portion of the fee be returned to the planning area upon reaching the 25 and 50 percent goals.

(3) Greater accountability of the use of state tonnage fees. The use of moneys should be evaluated to ensure that each program funded is beneficial on a statewide basis and that the program is assisting in meeting the percentage goals.

(4) Materials reduction should be reevaluated to emphasize pre-use consumer packaging.

(5) Overall, the point of diminishing returns may be approaching for certain local entities and these local entities should be provided the flexibility to determine the cost benefit of a reduction plan.

g. **ISAC.** Mr. Bob Mulqueen, Public Policy Analyst, Iowa State Association of Counties (ISAC), on behalf of ISAC proposed the following as endorsed legislative action:

◇ That local governments be allowed to implement solid waste flow control, subject to congressional action.

◇ That local planning areas be allowed flexibility in achieving waste reduction and to avoid increasing tipping fees beyond rates which are self-destructive to the program.

h. **Solid Waste Operations Society.** The Iowa Society of Solid Waste Operations, represented by Mr. Randy Hartmann, Mr. Thomas Hadden, and Ms. Cathy Morrison, proposed the following:

(1) Evaluate the 50 percent reduction goal. What additional investments are necessary to meet the goal? Is it attainable? Is it fiscally responsible? Significant public investments have already been made, would increased investment make a like or greater reduction in solid waste reduction? Alternatives and comments: establish a moratorium on the 50 percent goal, reduce the goal, extend the deadline for reaching the goal, or establish a list of required activities to replace the 50 percent goal. The goal helps to define the solid waste management strategy used, but local areas vary, one program does not fit every area (one size does not fit all due to geographic and demographic differences), and different waste streams must be addressed in different ways.

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Emphasize that it is a goal, not an unfunded state mandate: provide local planning areas with the tools necessary to implement the facilities necessary to meet the 50 percent goal, e.g., reestablish ordinance-based flow control, remove the property tax freeze on solid waste projects, or use state funding to develop the facilities needed to reach the 50 percent goal. Goals are a useful tool, but the goal should be reevaluated with regard to diminishing returns, the measurement should possibly be on a regional rather than a local basis to account for demographic/geographic differences, possibly measure reduction based upon the type of waste (residential, yard, industrial, toxicity, etc.).

(2) Redefine the measurement standard used. Use a performance-based standard, instead of looking only at numbers and certain programs.

(3) Eliminate the penalty fee for not meeting the 25 percent goal. Some waste streams such as commercial and industrial waste are not controllable. Lack of flow control presents a problem. Consider access to waste reduction programs, not just the numbers.

(4) Evaluate the programs funded by the solid waste tonnage fee.

(5) Evaluate the use of the state tonnage fees collected. Are the moneys collected currently being used to the highest and best use to achieve state waste reduction goals? State tonnage fees may be more effectively used at the local level by using the moneys to maintain existing programs and meet market competitiveness.

(6) Reduce the state tonnage fee. The average midwest tonnage fee is \$1.85 per ton of solid waste as compared to Iowa's fee of \$4.25 per ton. Reduction of the fee would allow more local flexibility in prioritizing limited resources, allow facilities to remain competitive, and would provide resources to support existing programs and facilities.

i. **Regional Councils.** Mr. Doug Elliott, Chairperson, Iowa Association of Regional Councils and Executive Director, East Central Iowa Council of Governments, proposed the following:

◇ The 50 percent goal may not be achievable for the region (based upon the region which he represents) due to the leveling off of waste abatement efforts despite implementation of new programs, etc. The deadline for reaching the goal may have to be extended.

◇ The goal may not be appropriate as currently implemented. Uniform application does not take into consideration the unique characteristics of the various regions due to forces such as geographic location, commerce, and waste flow control. The effect of the goal is placement of an unfunded mandate on the local area; penalties are a disincentive to local areas which have endeavored to implement programs but have still not reached the goal. A third-party review of the appropriateness of the goal may be beneficial.



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◇ Regents institutions are not part of the local planning area process and may benefit from inclusion in the comprehensive plan. Regents institutions are also impacted by outside forces but are not allowed to factor these in when calculating waste reduction.

j. **Private Agency Efforts.** Mr. Bob Armstrong, American Recycling Services, Inc., proposed the following:

◇ Retaining the 50 percent goal and suggested that it is achievable.

◇ Suggested that the 50 percent goal could be surpassed in one year if three procedures were initiated: enactment of a ban of certain materials from all landfills in Iowa, mandatory collection of solid waste, and mandatory use of recycled materials in state projects and purchasing.

◇ The 50 percent goal can be met by communities who have not yet met the goal through the offering of a comprehensive educational program to waste generators, the general public, and private waste collectors in their service area.

### **5. Materials Submitted to the Solid Waste Reduction and Recycling Study Committee and on File in the Legislative Service Bureau.**

a. The following were all submitted by Ms. Teresa Hay, Administrator, Waste Management Assistance Division, DNR:

(1) State of Iowa Waste Management Characteristics.

(2) Solid Waste Planning Areas' Goal Status current to November 14, 1996.

(3) Solid Waste Planning Areas listing.

(4) Regional Collection Centers list.

(5) Goal Progress and Financial Assistance map.

(6) Questions related to DNR's Measurement of State Waste Reduction and Recycling Goals sheet.

(7) Distribution of State Tonnage Fees as of July 1, 1996.

(8) RFP for the Composting Initiative.

b. Written testimony submitted by Ms. Margo Underwood, Director, Recycle Iowa.

c. The following packet of materials was submitted by Mr. Ed Brown, Recycling and Reuse Technology Transfer Center, University of Northern Iowa:

(1) A descriptive summary of the program.

(2) Preliminary Summary of Criticisms of and Responses to MSW Recycling Found in the Popular Press and Periodicals.

(3) What a Waste.

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(4) The Recycling Boondoggle.

(5) Anti-Recycling Myths.

(6) The Five Most Dangerous Myths About Recycling.

(7) The Daily Environment Report.

(8) The Impact of Recycling on Jobs In North Carolina.

(9) Recycling Economic Development Observing the Impact on the Plastics Industry in Iowa.

(10) Summary of information relating to the current status of recycling prepared by the Institute for Local Self-Reliance.

d. Written testimony submitted by Mr. Jerry Fleagle, Executive Director, Beautify Iowa Recycling Program (BIRP).

e. Written testimony submitted by Mr. Jeff Heland, President, Iowa League of Cities.

f. Written testimony submitted by Mr. Bob Mulqueen, Public Policy Analyst, Iowa State Association of Counties.

g. Written materials including a position paper submitted by the Scott Area Solid Waste Management Commission, written remarks submitted by Mr. Thomas B. Hadden III, and the "Iowa Society of Solid Waste Operations Review of Waste Reduction and Recycling" submitted by representatives of the Iowa Society of Solid Waste Operations.

h. Written testimony submitted by Mr. Doug Elliott, Chairperson, Iowa Association of Regional Councils, and Executive Director, East Central Iowa Council of Governments.

i. Written testimony submitted by Mr. Bob Armstrong, American Recycling Services, Inc.

j. A follow-up letter regarding concerns of the study committee, dated December 10, 1996, submitted by Ms. Teresa Hay, Administrator, Waste Management Division, DNR, to Co-chairpersons Deluhery and Bradley.

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