



August 6, 2026

Allison Cameron
Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
520 Lafayette Road North
St. Paul, MN 55155

RE: Comments on the Draft Resource Management Report

Dear Ms. Cameron,

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's (MPCA) Draft Minnesota Resource Management Report. Dakota County Environmental Resources Department offers the comments below for consideration to improve clarity and practical applicability and align with existing binding priorities.

In summary, changes recommended for the report include:

- Clarify purpose and alignment with existing solid waste policy
- Prominently acknowledge a 90 percent diversion goal is theoretical
- Connect alignment with preferred waste management methods in state law
- Provide a complete resource needs analysis
- Reflect the state's preferred waste management methods in state law
- Incorporate Minnesota-specific context
- Improve data presentation and reliability
- Acknowledge significant behavior change will be needed

Below provides detail and explanation on the recommended changes:

1. Clarify purpose and alignment with existing solid waste policy. The report purpose and connection to existing solid waste policy require more context. The report should acknowledge the significant public and private sector investments already made under the current policy and accurately reflect opportunities that already exist to divert more waste.

The report should list and explain Minnesota's existing solid waste framework, including current regulations, policies, and programs. This should include mandates in the MPCA's Metropolitan Solid Waste Management Policy Plan 2022–2042 (Policy Plan), as well as MPCA-approved county solid waste management plans, which already set requirements for the state and counties. This includes meeting the 75 percent recycling goal by 2030, ensuring pre-processing of municipal solid waste (MSW) by 2030, and maximizing resource recovery capacity. The report should explain whether each report recommendation supplements, modifies, or conflicts with the Policy Plan and county solid waste management plans.

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In addition, the report should identify existing barriers to achieving current waste management goals and explain how current regulations, policies, and programs are performing in terms of achieving the goals and opportunities for improvement.

2. Prominently acknowledge a 90-percent diversion goal is theoretical. The draft report states that the 90-percent reduction scenario “is not a mandated target, but rather an analytical framework” to “understand the scale of system changes needed.” In addition, MPCA staff stated in the June 3, 2026, Information Session that the report is a “policy analysis document,” and that “future choices would still need to occur through separate processes.”

The report should specifically state in the Executive Summary and Recommendation sections that the recommendations provide a theoretical framework that is analytical and non-binding in nature and are not intended to be used in isolation as a pathway to achieve a 90 percent target. The report needs to be clear that it does not serve as the basis for future mandates without comprehensive analysis of economic, environmental, and technical feasibility, separate legislative action, and dedicated funding.

The report should also reconcile the 90 percent modeling scenario with the existing statutory 75 percent recycling goal and acknowledge that a realistic path is not yet in place to achieve this recycling rate goal by 2030 for Twin Cities Metropolitan Area (TCMA) counties.

3. Connect alignment with preferred waste management methods in state law. Several elements of the modeling and policy recommendations in the report deviate from the statutory waste hierarchy. The report should clearly state if a new hierarchy is being proposed.

Minnesota’s waste management hierarchy in the Minnesota Waste Management Act (Mn. Stat. 115A) establishes preference for managing waste in order of most to least beneficial to the environment. The Minnesota Legislature established a clear policy direction by establishing this hierarchy, which prioritizes preventing or reducing waste, reuse, recycling, organics recycling, and waste-to-energy (WTE) before landfilling.

The report includes a modeling scenario pathway for diversion that omits WTE as a waste management option. Excluding WTE and relying solely on landfilling for disposal statewide deviates from the hierarchy and will increase the amount of waste being disposed of at landfills, which could prematurely close landfills. This includes the two privately owned and operated landfills located in Dakota County that serve the TCMA region. The report should also quantify the additional landfilling that would result if WTE facility capacity were reduced before diversion goals are met.

The report includes a recommendation for universal mandatory source separation of organics starting with large generators and expanding to residents but lacks similar source separation recommendations for traditional recycling for all waste generators. Traditional recycling is preferred over organics recycling in the waste management hierarchy.

4. Provide a complete resource needs analysis. Achieving the proposed reduction target will take significant additional resources. The draft report’s economic impact assessment does not adequately assess required investments needed nor the financial impact to stakeholders, including counties, private partners, and ratepayers. It should pair potential economic benefits, such as job creation, with the cost impacts for each stakeholder.

The report states that progress toward a 90-percent diversion modeled scenario “ultimately depends on improvements at the local level.” Counties already face significant unfunded solid waste management mandates. The report should identify what steps will be needed to develop expanded or new funding sources for counties and other stakeholders to fully implement new waste management programs and infrastructure.

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The report would likewise benefit from a high-level discussion of roles, including ways to encourage private sector investment to expand capacity to align with Minn. Stat. § 473.803 for Metropolitan counties to “encourage ownership and operation of solid waste facilities by private industry.”

5. Reflect the state’s preferred waste management methods in state law. The report lists mixed waste processing as least cost-effective and “a last resort” method due to its “higher cost and lower-value outputs.” This conflicts with MPCA’s Policy Plan requirement for TCMA counties to implement pre-processing of MSW at resources recovery and landfills by 2030, despite steel and aluminum comprising only 2–3% of the waste stream. Dakota County’s existing MPCA-approved 2024–2044 waste management plan places this requirement on landfills via ordinance. Counties should not be placed in a conflicting position where MPCA’s Policy Plan mandates pre-processing while another MPCA document devalues it.

Implementation of the Policy Plan pre-processing mandate creates uncertainty as to the authority to prohibit landfilling of unprocessed MSW, when TCMA processing facilities are already determined to be at capacity under MN Stat. 473.848. The report should include impacts of the Policy Plan pre-processing mandate, including to ratepayers and the flow of waste in the state.

6. Incorporate Minnesota-specific context. The report should emphasize Minnesota-based examples when discussing model diversion programs, policies, and regulations relevant to a 90 percent reduction scenario, rather than rely heavily on out-of-state case studies. Local examples provide more accurate context for Minnesota’s infrastructure, regulatory environment, and regional conditions and the financial investments that have been already made. Minnesota examples, such as Dakota County’s commercial and residential recycling requirements, commercial organics diversion requirements, and hauler-standardized messaging requirements, along with other state and local initiatives, should be highlighted alongside or in place of national examples.

When non-Minnesota programs and policies are included in report recommendations, additional contextual information should be provided, including implementation costs and documented performance at diverting waste from the disposal.

7. Improve data presentation and reliability. The draft report contains modeling and data inaccuracies, unclear assumptions, incorrect classifications, and missing information. This oversight is problematic if flawed data is used to assess whether a 90 percent goal is achievable. The report needs to present and interpret data accurately to support reliable conclusions and meaningful policy recommendations, including consistent labeling and explanation of tables, figures, and charts, citation of data sources, consistent use of terminology, citation of limitations in modeling or assumptions, and use of accurate waste stream classifications (e.g., remove construction and demolition data to not be included as part of MSW). Specifically, the report also needs to correct the following specific to Dakota County:
 - Figure 17. Recycling processing infrastructure in Minnesota (pg. 37) identifies large-scale source-separated organics (SSO) facilities that process food scraps. The figure needs to be updated to show facilities currently operating SSO facilities. The report needs to also clarify which facilities listed are actively managing materials versus inactive. Not differentiating between the two implies Dakota County has three active large-scale SSO facilities. In fact, there are two large-scale SSO facilities operating in the county: Reconserve of Minnesota and Waste Management Empire SSO Compost.
 - Table 13. Material recovery facilities in Minnesota (pg. 38) is inaccurate and needs to be updated.
 - Recycle Minnesota is a large recycling facility located in Lakeville (Dakota County), serving the region, and should be added, including the facility data. Relevant modeling scenarios should also be updated to reflect this recycling facility’s data in the report, as needed.

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- “Republic Service (Inver Grove Heights Recycling Center)” data lists 1,070 tons sent to market, which is under-reported. Facility data reported to Dakota County indicate 28,258 tons were sent to market in 2021. Modeling scenarios should also be updated to reflect this change, as needed.
 - The SSO program highlighted for Dakota County (pg. 51) is inaccurate. The report should be updated to reflect that Dakota County includes a network of residential food scrap drop off sites supported with city partnerships. The county adopted a phase-in countywide ordinance in 2019 requiring large commercial generators to divert back-of-house organics by 2024, paired with compliance resources and inspections.
8. Acknowledge significant behavior change will be needed. The report must acknowledge that achieving any new waste diversion goal will require substantial behavior change from generators. Expanded collection access will not be enough to achieve increased diversion. The report should also recognize that major uncontrollable factors—such as shifts in consumer purchasing and the difficulty of consistent generator participation in the waste system—will heavily influence diversion outcomes and cannot be quickly changed.

Thank you again for the opportunity to share our comments. We appreciate the MPCA's work on this report and look forward to continuing our partnership to prevent waste at the source and advance waste management higher up the state's waste management hierarchy.

Sincerely,



Nikki Stewart
Environmental Resources Director

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