

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2010 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Revised

House Bill 982

(Delegate Niemann, *et al.*)

Environmental Matters

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Solid Waste Management - Recycling and Source Reduction - Study

This bill requires the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE), in consultation with local governments, waste haulers, material resource facilities, and other affected parties, to conduct a study to evaluate solid waste management processes that reduce the solid waste stream through recycling and source reduction and submit an interim report to the General Assembly by December 15, 2010, and a final report by December 15, 2011. The study must evaluate (1) the expansion of recycling efforts in nonresidential markets; (2) the feasibility of commodity-specific targets; and (3) long-term funding for solid waste and recycling management.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: MDE can implement the bill's requirements with existing budgeted resources following a redirection of staff and agency priorities.

Local Effect: The bill does not materially affect local government operations or finances.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: In 1988, the Maryland Recycling Act required each county to submit a recycling plan. Jurisdictions with more than 150,000 residents were required to reduce their solid waste by 20%, and jurisdictions with less than 150,000 residents were required to reduce their solid waste by 15%. According to MDE, by 2000, every county had met or exceeded their percentage requirements under the Maryland Recycling Act. Further legislation enacted in 2000 established a voluntary statewide diversion goal of 40% by 2005.

Counties have flexibility to determine the best way to reach the required recycling rates. However, the county recycling plan, revised on a triennial basis, must address specified issues such as the feasibility of composting mixed solid waste, methods for the separate collection and composting of yard waste, and methods of financing county recycling efforts, among other issues. Chapters 264 and 265 of 2009 added to this list a strategy for collecting, processing, marketing, and disposing of recyclable materials from county public schools.

Beginning January 1, 1992, each State agency was required to implement a recycling plan created in part by the Office of Recycling to reduce through recycling the amount of the solid waste stream generated for disposal by the State government by at least 20% or to an amount that is determined practical and economically feasible, but in no case less than 10%. Chapter 408 of 2009 requires the State to place a recycling bin at all State-owned and -operated office buildings and devise a system for the recycling of aluminum, glass, paper, and plastic.

Background: According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), in 2008 (the most recent year for which data is available) 54.2% of the municipal solid waste stream was discarded in landfills, 24.3% was recycled, 12.6% was recovered as energy through combustion, and 8.9% was composted. MDE reports that, in 2008, Maryland had a recycling rate of 43.9% and a waste diversion rate of 47.5%.

In addition to the issue of landfill diversion, recycling is encouraged due to the potential for significant reductions in virgin material extraction, energy use, and emissions of greenhouse gases. For example, according to EPA, nationwide recycling and composting activities in 2008 prevented the equivalent of 182 million tons of carbon dioxide emissions; this is the same level of emissions produced by 33 million cars.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Calvert and Howard counties; Baltimore City; Board of Public Works; Maryland Department of Planning; Maryland Department of the Environment; Maryland Environmental Service; Northeast Maryland Waste Disposal Authority; U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - March 9, 2010
mpc/lgc Revised - House Third Reader - April 7, 2010

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