

Scope of Study

MUNICIPAL SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT SERVICES IN CONNECTICUT

In May 2008, the Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee approved a scope of study on the specific topic of impending changes in ownership of the state's trash-to-energy plants, and what implications these ownership changes might have for the state and its municipalities in terms of how municipal solid waste (MSW) is handled. Long-term contracts governing the working relationships between municipalities and solid waste service providers are also about to begin terminating, adding to the uncertainty for municipalities and their solid waste options.

Committee staff presented descriptive background information to the committee at a briefing on September 23 pertinent to the issue of trash-to-energy facility ownership. At that meeting, many committee members raised questions about and expressed interest in a number of municipal solid waste-related areas beyond trash-to-energy facility ownership, some not contemplated by the May 2008 scope. Based on that discussion, the committee co-chairs met to determine how the committee's interests in a more comprehensive study of solid waste handling might be addressed.

At its September 25, 2008 meeting, the committee voted to expand the scope as set out below.

AREA OF FOCUS

This study will review municipal solid waste management services provided through trash haulers, transfer stations, recycling facilities, trash-to-energy facilities, MSW landfills, and ash landfills, in order to assess whether the services are adequate, available at reasonable cost, sustainable, and compatible with state policies and goals. The study will also explore alternatives to the state's current disposal technologies and the potential uses of ash residue.

AREAS OF ANALYSIS

1. For each of the key elements listed below pertinent to handling municipal solid waste in Connecticut, describe the current characteristics of each element in terms of: 1) nature of entities owning and/or operating the services; and 2) how municipalities operate with respect to each element, including the types of service and costs.
 - a. *Hauling*
 - b. *Recycling*
 - c. *Transfer stations*
 - d. *Trash-to-energy facilities*
 - e. *MSW landfills*
 - f. *Ash landfills*
 - g. *Out-of-state disposal*

2. Identify for each element above the current state law and/or regulation affecting it, specifically citing which public or quasi-public agencies (e.g., Department of Environmental Protection, Connecticut Resources Recovery Authority) are responsible for what activities and, to the extent possible, assessing activity compliance.
3. Assess current municipal options by:
 - a. comparing the Connecticut MSW market, in total, by element and between elements, to economic models; and
 - b. describing perceived municipal choice.
4. Describe the relationship between state environmental policies and/or goals and the current system of handling MSW in Connecticut, including the impact of:
 - a. trash-to-energy facilities in regard to recycling;
 - b. alternative recycling programs (e.g., single stream recycling); and
 - c. source reduction efforts (e.g., “Pay-As-You-Throw” programs).
5. Examine the state’s reliance on its current trash-to-energy facilities including:
 - a. an assessment of existing facilities’ ability to meet statewide MSW disposal need;
 - b. a comparison of the existing trash-to-energy facilities with:
 - i. other in-state disposal options;
 - ii. out-of-state disposal options; and
 - iii. emerging disposal technologies; and
 - c. a review of potential uses for ash residue.
6. Identify how ownership of any of the key elements of MSW handling affects the state and municipalities.
 - a. Assess whether there is an ideal mix of private and public/quasi-public ownership.
 - b. Describe steps the state could and/or should take to achieve such a mix if desired.
7. Assess whether more or less state government regulation of MSW handling would contribute to solid waste management services being:
 - a. adequate;
 - b. available at reasonable cost;
 - c. sustainable; and
 - d. compatible with state policies and goals.
8. Review experience in Massachusetts, New Jersey, and other selected states.