

Title: 2021 Biennial Report on Solid Waste

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Committee: House & Senate Committees
on Natural Resources

Authorizing Law #: 1987 Act
78; 2019 Act 69

Section #: codified at 10 V.S.A. §6604(b);
§113

Executive Summary

Since the [2019 Biennial Solid Waste Report](#), solid waste managers and ANR have been implementing the final phases of the Universal Recycling (UR) law that banned [food scraps from disposal on July 1, 2020](#). Vermont has seen a 10% increase in recycling since 2014 and food scrap collection has increased each year since 2016. However, Vermonters continue to generate more waste each year, with per capita waste disposal up 8% since 2014, and diversion remaining at ~35%. While ANR anticipates the food scrap ban and the July 1, 2020 [Single Use Products law](#) will help reduce waste, more work needs to be done to meet the diversion and disposal goals of the [2019 MMP](#). Since the last Biennial Report, ANR has also implemented an on-line hauler permit system and revised the [Solid Waste Rules](#) to accommodate new management techniques for a changing waste stream. ANR will continue to work with stakeholders and partners on reducing waste and its toxicity, improving recycling, building a culture of reducing food waste and composting the scraps, and improving the Bottle Bill, Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) management, and the functioning of our Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) laws.

Key Takeaways

The Universal Recycling (UR) law is working:

Vermonters [recycle 72% of mandated recyclables](#).

Facilities report increased food scrap collection and composting since the ban.

The number of licensed food scrap haulers has more than doubled since 2012.

ANR will continue implementing UR with sensitivity to entities impacted by COVID-19.

The Single-Use Products law is helping Vermont reduce reliance on single-use plastics and products. ANR recommends consideration of the [SUP Working Group recommendations](#).

Bottle Bill: Vermonters redeem nearly 75% of eligible containers. ANR recommends that the bottle bill handling fee be increased from 4¢ to 5¢ for non-commingled brands.

Batteries: Vermont leads the nation in per capita battery recycling, but 5 times more primary batteries are disposed than recycled and some pose a fire hazard to workers and facilities. ANR recommends expanding the limited battery disposal ban to include all battery types.

Vermont's Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) programs continue to lead the nation in per capita recycling of electronics; paint; batteries; and mercury products. View data table [here](#).

Discussion

- **Vermont Materials Management Plan (MMP):** The current [MMP](#) was adopted in 2019 and Solid Waste Management Entities adopted new five-year Solid Waste Implementation Plans in 2020. Goals of the 2019 MMP include a new 10% decrease in waste generation and a continued push to achieve a 50% recycling/composting rate and a 25% reduction in MSW disposal by 2025. While the amount of recycled and composted material is currently rising, meeting the MMP goals will require further increasing diversion and reversing the present trend of increased waste generation.
- **Universal Recycling Law (Act 148, 2012):** While diversion rates have remained steady at ~35% over the last 5 years (See the [2019 Diversion and Disposal Report](#) for full data), food scrap collection and composting have increased considerably since the full landfill ban on food scraps went into effect on July 1, 2020. Food scrap management is expected to continue to rise as new services and capacity are built to meet new market demand. In 2019, ANR awarded 4 grants, totaling \$724,357, for food waste management infrastructure, and ANR ran a 2020 public educational campaign, [Let's Scrap Food Waste](#), to raise awareness about the food scrap ban.
- **Single-Use Products (SUP) Law (Act 69 § 113, 2019):** With the start of the SUP law on July 1, 2020, Vermont is transitioning away from plastic bags, straws, stirrers, and foam food and beverage containers. ANR has given webinars, conducted social media outreach, sent information to stakeholders, created a [web page](#) with fact sheets, an informational video, and downloadable signs, and followed up on complaints (to date, 11/14 are in compliance; 3 investigations are pending).
- **Household Hazardous Waste (HHW):** Solid Waste Management Entities (SWMEs) have offered HHW collection services since the early 1990s. To increase convenience, ANR awarded 5 grants in 2020 for HHW collection, totaling \$729,112. ANR also awards ~\$400K annually through Solid Waste Implementation grants to all SWMEs, which are primarily used for HHW events and services. For the past three years ('18-'20), ANR has provided an additional \$200K to SWMEs for these services.
- **Bottle Bill:** Beginning October 1, 2019, all unclaimed beverage container deposits (except liquor) must be remitted to the Tax Dept. for the Clean Water Fund (\$2,411,182 in unclaimed deposits to date). From October 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020, 74% of non-liquor containers sold in Vermont were redeemed.
- **EPR Program Success:** Thanks to solid waste managers and stewardship organizations, “special recycling” increased 14% for batteries and 4% for paint in 2019. View data table [here](#).
- **Landfills:** As required by Act 69 of 2019, this Biennial Report includes a study—found [here](#)—on issues related to opening a second landfill in the State. As the report describes, siting additional landfill(s) could decrease greenhouse gas emissions associated with waste transportation to the Coventry landfill. However, significant barriers exist to new landfill construction, including community opposition, state and local permitting constraints, limitations on the control of waste flow, and obtaining the necessary economy of scale to make a landfill project economically viable. Efforts to reduce, reuse, and recycle our waste decrease the need for additional landfill capacity and have a greater impact on greenhouse gas emission reductions.