

Title: 2021 Biennial Report on Solid Waste

Year: 2021

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Date Reported: 11/4/2020

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 a surge in food scrap diversion in response to the July 1st ban, however, the amount of waste Vermonters generate continues to increase with per capita waste disposal up 16% since 2012. While ANR anticipates the food scrap ban and the July 1, 2020 [Single Use Products law](#) will help reduce waste, there's certainly more work that needs to be done. 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 its focus 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](#), which is a great statewide recovery rate.

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

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

ANR will continue implementing UR with sensitivity to restaurants 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 batteries are disposed than recycled, some posing 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 are adopting new five-year Solid Waste Implementation Plans by the end of 2020. Goals of the 2019 MMP include a 10% decrease in waste generation and a continued push to achieve a 50% recycling/composting rate goal by 2025.
- **Universal Recycling Law (Act 148, 2012):** While diversion rates have remained steady at ~35% over the last 5 years (See the [2018 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. To implement this law ANR has given webinars, conducted social media outreach, sent information to stakeholders, and created a [web page](#) with fact sheets, an informational video, and downloadable signs. Read the SUP Working Group [Final Report](#).
- **Household Hazardous Waste (HHW):** Solid Waste Management Entities have offered HHW collection services for the past 20-30 years. To increase convenience, in 2020, ANR awarded 5 grants, totaling \$729,112, for HHW collection facilities.
- **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. To date, \$2,411,182 in unclaimed deposits has been directed to the Fund. 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 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.