

Partnership on Waste and Energy 2021 Annual Report

Letter from the Chair

The Partnership on Waste and Energy (PWE) is a joint powers board comprised of Ramsey/Washington Recycling & Energy Board and Hennepin County members. PWE, established in 2017, is the organization through which Hennepin, Ramsey and Washington counties collaborate on solid waste management issues.

The three counties serve over two million residents and are responsible for managing about a third of the state's municipal solid waste. The counties invest heavily in industry-leading technologies to aggressively recover resources from trash, reducing the need for landfilling. Working together around shared interests in reducing and managing waste has allowed for efficient, targeted, rapid efforts at impacting the legislative process. PWE partners with other organizations on priority issues and is grateful to its partners in this shared work.



- Fran Miron, Washington County Commissioner and 2022 PWE Board Chair

Governance and Administration

PWE is governed by a board of three county commissioners, including the chair and vice chair of the Ramsey/Washington Recycling & Energy Board (Ramsey County Commissioner Victoria Reinhardt and Washington County Commissioner Fran Miron, respectively) and Hennepin County Commissioner Debbie Goettel. The chair of the PWE Board rotates annually, and in 2021 the chair was Commissioner Reinhardt. Ramsey/Washington Recycling & Energy serves as the administrative agent for PWE, providing financing, procurement, communication and planning services to the partnership.



Legislative Work

PWE, through its legislative advocacy efforts, seeks to end waste, promote renewable energy and enhance the health and resiliency of its communities while advancing equity and responding to the challenges of a changing climate. Each year, the PWE governing board adopts a legislative platform. In the 2021 legislative session, PWE's lobbying activities included the following successes:

More funding for waste reduction and recycling, including a 4% increase in SCORE grants

Preventing the loss of St. Paul District Energy as a biomass energy solution for wood waste

Securing community grants and assistance to fight the impacts of the emerald ash borer

Bolstering markets for biofuels from anaerobic digestion through the Natural Gas Innovation Act

Prohibiting PFAS chemicals in food packaging

PWE board members and lobbyists engaged with legislators around these topics and continued ongoing collaboration with partners toward common goals. PWE provided written and oral testimony and created policy position statements to advance its interests.

Online Hazardous Waste Training Now in Spanish



PWE initiated a project in 2020 to create online, on-demand hazardous waste generator training materials in all three counties, in part as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic making classroom trainings infeasible. In 2021, Hennepin, Ramsey and Washington county compliance staff again partnered to develop a Spanish version of the online training, further expanding accessibility for hazardous waste education.

Both the English and Spanish trainings are free and available anytime, allowing regulated parties to obtain this important information at their convenience. Future considerations include translating the training into additional languages.

Product Stewardship

“Product stewardship” is a policy approach that holds producers responsible for the management of their products and packaging for the materials’ full life cycle to minimize the environmental and social impacts.

PWE partners with the Minnesota Solid Waste Administrators Association (SWAA) Product Stewardship Committee to advance a shared vision of product stewardship across the state. This includes:

- Supporting product stewardship efforts that reduce lifecycle impacts of products and packaging
- Reducing financial burdens associated with waste disposal on local government and taxpayers
- Establishing measurable and enforceable goals

In 2021, PWE counties partnered with the Product Stewardship Institute to develop consensus with multiple stakeholder groups on extended producer responsibility for packaging in Minnesota. The effort will result in a bill to be introduced in the 2023 Minnesota Legislative Session with a coalition of support. PWE also collaborates to advance policies related to other products like carpet, mattresses and electronics.



Anaerobic Digestion

Diverting organics from the trash through anaerobic digestion (AD) is a strategy that would help PWE counties make progress toward zero waste. Food and organic materials decomposing in landfills produce methane, a potent greenhouse gas. Climate experts rank AD as a top climate solution because the methane created and captured from the controlled process reduces greenhouse gas emissions and creates renewable natural gas, fertilizer and compost.



In 2021, both Ramsey/Washington Recycling & Energy (R&E) and Hennepin County advanced efforts to develop organics recycling infrastructure. Hennepin County added an AD facility to its 2021 capital budget, requested \$21 million from the state's 2022 bonding bill, and released a request for proposals for an AD facility to process organic materials. R&E initiated phase two of its procurement process to partner with private end markets, potentially including an AD technology vendor, to manage source-separated organics and other organic-rich material.

The shared interest in recovering the resource value of organic waste drove PWE collaboration in 2021. This included support for legislative initiatives, such as the Future Fuels Act and the Natural Gas Innovation Act (now passed into law) and ongoing work through partnerships with Great Plains Institute, EcoEngineers, Coalition for Renewable Natural Gas, American Biogas Council, Minnesota Future Fuels Coalition and the Bioeconomy Coalition of Minnesota.

Battery Campaign

Fires caused by batteries are a growing concern for waste and recycling facilities across the country, including those owned by PWE counties. Through PWE, the counties launched a 2021 campaign to educate residents on proper battery disposal. Goals of the campaign were to increase the number of batteries brought to drop-off sites and reduce the number of batteries in the trash and recycling.

The campaign was shared widely by municipalities and residents in the three counties, and partners across the state and country asked PWE to share the campaign assets to educate their communities. Comparing 2020 and 2021 battery collection numbers at county drop-off facilities, Ramsey County saw a 7% increase and Washington County saw a 10% increase in battery collection. Hennepin County's overall numbers stayed relatively flat, but the county did see a significant increase in lithium battery collection (lithium batteries are the most hazardous in terms of fire risks). The counties will continue using the assets created as part of the campaign in educating their residents.



Financials

Each year, the board approves a budget for the following fiscal year, which aligns with the calendar year. PWE is funded with contributions by Hennepin County and Ramsey/Washington Recycling & Energy. In 2021, the PWE budget expenditures were as follows:

Lobbying Services	\$74,975	Contracts with lobbying firms Capitol Hill Associates and Fryberger Law Firm.
Battery Campaign	\$47,835	Communication campaign to educate the public about proper battery disposal.
Anaerobic Digestion	\$28,626	Contract with Great Plains Institute to explore anaerobic digestion opportunities.
Personnel	\$21,800	R&E staffing support to PWE for planning, accounting, and contract management
Hazardous Waste Training	\$19,079	Online training for hazardous waste generators in English and Spanish.
Product Stewardship	\$11,524	Contract with the Product Stewardship Institute to explore product stewardship opportunities.
Communications	\$8,850	Designing of professional materials such as the legislative platform and position statements.
Insurance	\$1,524	Organizational insurance.
Total	\$213,913	