

Partnership on Waste and Energy 2022 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 Partnership's collaboration supports and maximizes the counties' efforts to recover resources from trash, reducing the need for landfilling. In 2022, the Partnership focused on product stewardship, wood waste management and getting organic material such as food scraps out of the trash. Partnership members made great strides last year to expand regional organics capacity through anaerobic digestion. Our partnership allows us to advance our mutual goals by sharing information and resources to amplify our efforts.

By coordinating on our shared interests, PWE has become a key voice in advancing legislative solid waste policy that helps meet our waste reduction, reuse and recycling goals. We look forward to an exciting 2023.

- Debbie Goettel, Hennepin County Commissioner and 2023 Partnership Board Chair



Governance and Administration

The Partnership is governed by a board of three county commissioners, including the chair and vice chair of the Ramsey/Washington Recycling & Energy Board (Washington County Commissioner Fran Miron and Ramsey County Commissioner Victoria Reinhardt, respectively) and Hennepin County Commissioner Debbie Goettel. The chair of the Partnership Board rotates annually, and in 2022 the chair was Fran Miron. R&E serves as the administrative agent for the Partnership, providing financing, procurement, communication and planning services.



Legislative Work and Highlights

Through its legislative advocacy efforts, the Partnership 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 Partnership Board adopts a legislative platform. In the 2022 legislative session, lobbying activities advanced Partnership interests in the following areas:

Advancing efforts to redirect Solid Waste Management Tax receipts from the General Fund into SCORE grants to counties

Securing funding to address the ongoing issue of emerald ash borer

Creating opportunities to address PFAS, a forever chemical

Laying groundwork to adopt product stewardship policies for packaging and mattresses and to restore funds borrowed from the Metropolitan Landfill Contingency Action Trust

Partnership Board members, staff and lobbyists engaged with legislators around these topics and continued ongoing collaboration with partners toward common goals. In addition, the Partnership provided written and oral testimony and created policy position statements to advance its interests.

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.

The Partnership 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 2022, the Partnership continued its work with the Product Stewardship Institute to develop a bill in Minnesota for extended producer responsibility for packaging. This work included a committee process to develop elements of a bill that is customized to Minnesota. The committee was a broad group of stakeholders that met multiple times in spring and fall 2022. Additionally, staff completed one-on-one calls to stakeholders to get additional feedback on bill elements.

The Partnership also collaborates to advance policies related to other products, such as carpet, mattresses, batteries and electronics.

Wood Waste

The Partnership is concerned about the increasing amount of wood waste from trees infected with emerald ash borer (EAB). Local governments statewide face unfunded mandates to respond to EAB and the growing volume of wood waste. The seven-county metro area is expected to enter the peak phase of ash tree loss during this decade, requiring the management and disposal of more than 1.67 million tons of wood waste. To better understand and address this issue, the Partnership Board included funding in the 2022 budget for wood waste market development.

During 2022, the Partnership piloted a one-time grant for a local business that reclaims discarded ash trees to create high-quality wood products. The funding increased their processing of ash tree waste with critical equipment purchases, staff time and public messaging around utilization of urban ash wood.

Additionally, the Partnership used a professional consultant, Cambium Carbon, to assess current wood waste flows within the wood waste disposal industries. Cambium Carbon completed an in-depth assessment, including more than 30 stakeholder interviews, to detail current volumes of wood waste and quantify the potential impact of EAB-generated wood waste on the current management system. Cambium Carbon produced a report detailing their research and findings, which also provides recommendations for future wood waste management. The Twin Cities Metro Area Emerald Ash Borer Wood Waste Study can be found on the [Partnership website](#).



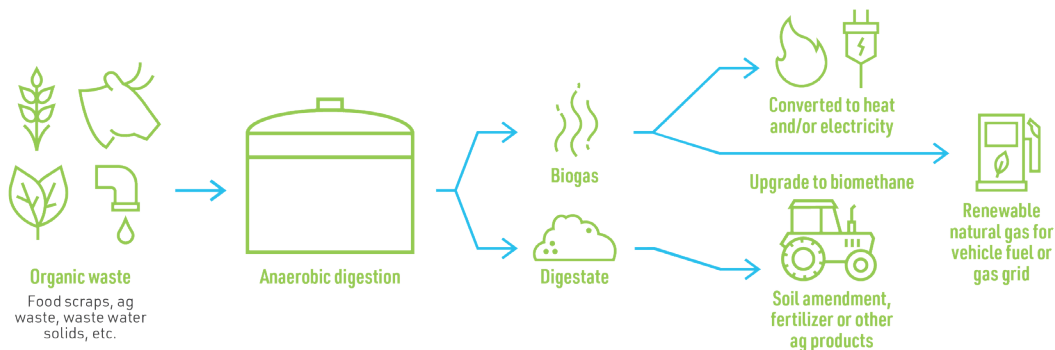
Anaerobic Digestion

Food waste digestion is a strategy identified by both Hennepin County and Ramsey/Washington R&E as a key progression to capturing more value from waste and meeting climate goals. Food and other organics decompose and produce methane, a potent greenhouse gas. Anaerobic digestion (AD) is a top climate solution because the methane is captured using a controlled process, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, creating renewable natural gas that displaces fossil fuel use and making valuable soil amendment products from the digestate.

In 2022, R&E and Hennepin County made major strides to develop organics recycling infrastructure in the Twin Cities Metro. Hennepin County evaluated proposals, selected a preferred proposer and began discussions for design refinement and value engineering for an AD facility to process source-separated organics. R&E conducted direct negotiations with two proposers for a digester to process source-separated food scraps and organic-rich material from the R&E Center.

The shared interest in recovering the resource value of organics drove the Partnership's efforts on AD in 2022. This manifested in support for legislative initiatives, such as the Future Fuels Act/Clean Transportation Standard. The Partnership also participated in the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission's rule development process to implement the 2021 Natural Gas Innovation Act (of which the Partnership supported the passage).

The Partnership continues to support development of AD through collaboration with organizations such as the Great Plains Institute, Coalition for Renewable Natural Gas, American Biogas Council, the Minnesota Future Fuels Coalition and the Bioeconomy Coalition of Minnesota.



Financials

Each year, the Partnership Board approves a budget for the following fiscal year, which aligns with the calendar year. In 2022, the Partnership budget expenditures were as follows:

Personnel	R&E staffing support to PWE for planning, accounting, and contract management.	\$26,700
Communications	Designing of professional materials such as the legislative platform and position statements.	\$7,605
Lobbying Services	Contracts with lobbying firms Capitol Hill Associates and Fryberger Law Firm.	\$74,975
Legislative Tracking	Contract with Enview to track bill progress in the MN legislature pertinent to the Partnership.	\$6,000
Wood Waste Management	Market development for wood waste and a contract for a wood waste evaluation study.	\$47,220
Anaerobic Digestion	Contract with EcoEngineers to work on opportunities to support anaerobic digestion.	\$8,838
Product Stewardship	Contract with the Product Stewardship Institute to explore product stewardship opportunities.	\$58,900
Insurance	Organizational insurance.	\$1,407
Total		\$231,645