

Partnership on Waste and Energy 2024 Annual Report

Letter from the Chair

In 2024, the Partnership on Waste and Energy (Partnership) continues advancing policies that reduce waste, improve recycling and create a more sustainable future for our communities.

A major achievement was the passage of Minnesota’s extended producer responsibility law for packaging and paper products. This landmark policy shifts recycling costs from residents to producers; ensures packaging is reusable, recyclable or compostable by 2032; and simplifies recycling statewide. Years of advocacy alongside supporters and coordination with impacted entities made this possible, demonstrating the power of partnership.

Beyond this, we expanded waste diversion programs and are leaders in the search for solutions to challenges like wood waste management.

I want to recognize Ramsey County Commissioner Victoria Reinhardt, whose nearly three decades of transformative leadership in waste policy – including eight years on the Partnership Board – has helped advance Minnesota’s sustainability efforts. Her impact will be felt for years to come.

Looking ahead, we remain committed to building on this momentum in collaboration with others to shape a waste system that is better for our communities and the environment.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Fran Miron'.

Fran Miron
Washington County Commissioner and 2025 Partnership Board Chair

Governance & Administration

The Partnership is governed by a board of three county commissioners, including the chair and vice chair of the Ramsey/Washington Recycling & Energy (R&E) Board and a Hennepin County Commissioner. In 2024, the three members of the Partnership Board were Washington County Commissioner Fran Miron, Ramsey County Commissioner Victoria Reinhardt and Hennepin County Commissioner Debbie Goettel. The chair of the Partnership Board rotates annually. In 2024, the chair was Commissioner Reinhardt. R&E serves as the administrative agent for the Partnership, providing accounting, procurement, communication and planning services.



Legislative Highlights

The Partnership's legislative advocacy seeks to end waste, promote renewable energy and enhance the health and resiliency of its communities. Several policy objectives were achieved in 2024, the most notable being the Packaging Waste and Cost Reduction Act, which establishes extended producer responsibility for packaging and paper products in Minnesota.

The law was developed to meet the interests of residents, communities and private industry. It will prevent waste, increase recycling and save local governments millions of dollars. Many view it as the state's most significant advance in waste and recycling policy since the SCORE law was enacted in 1989 to establish state recycling policy and funding.

The Packaging Waste and Cost Reduction Act will:

- Incentivize sustainable packaging
- Require packaging to be reusable, recyclable or compostable by 2032
- Reduce the customer's cost of recycling by 90%
- Increase refill and reuse options
- Expand recycling service access and convenience
- Simplify and standardize recycling across the state



Ramsey County Commissioner Victoria Reinhardt testifies before the House Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy Committee Feb. 20, 2024, in support of HF3577, sponsored by Rep. Sydney Jordan, right. (Photo by Andrew VonBank, House Public Information Services)

The Partnership played a pivotal role in shaping this policy, ensuring it met Minnesota's needs and securing broad support. The Governor signed the bill into law on May 19, 2024.

The Partnership also supported successful efforts to fund anaerobic digestion, respond to emerald ash borer and establish nation-leading product stewardship for boat wrap.

Expanding Capacity for Addressing Wood Waste

The Partnership commissioned Cambium Carbon to develop a new report, [Expanding Capacity for Woody Biomass Processing in the Twin Cities Metro Area](#), which recommends near- and long-term opportunities for addressing wood waste in the Twin Cities region. Informed by feedback from over 25 stakeholders, it follows up on the Partnership's 2022 report, [Twin Cities Metro Area Emerald Ash Borer Wood Waste Study](#).

The report found that wood waste generation is greater than what existing utilization and processing outlets can handle, and the problem is only getting bigger. Lack of adequate processing and utilization capacity has led to increased tree removal and disposal costs. It has also led to increased open burning of wood waste, which puts public health at risk and squanders a resource.

Proposed near-term solutions include energy recovery, mulch and compost, biochar, lumber production and creating wood products such as pallets. Longer term solutions include processing wood waste for wood pellet fuel, sustainable aviation fuel and green hydrogen.

Although the report focuses on the Twin Cities region, the recommendations will be vital to addressing the growing challenge of wood waste throughout Minnesota. State support to develop and maintain solutions is critical, and the scope of the problem demands regional collaboration.



Image courtesy of Cambium Carbon

Zero Waste Challenges

In 2024, the Partnership supported work by the three counties to continue to engage residents in waste reduction challenges, expanding efforts to include both food waste and plastics.

The **Plastic-Free Challenge** in February encouraged participants to reduce single-use plastics. Plastics made up an estimated 16% of the waste stream in Ramsey and Washington counties in 2022 and can be difficult to recycle. Additionally, plastics contribute to litter, harm water and wildlife and have largely unknown health impacts. With support from 53 partner organizations, 1,757 participants took 19,098 actions, helping prevent over 11,900 plastic items from entering the waste stream and avoiding 5,200 pounds of CO₂ emissions.

In August, the **Stop Food Waste Challenge** focused on reducing household food waste, which makes up nearly half of all wasted food. With 32 partners including co-ops, cities, corporations and farmers markets, 771 participants completed over 6,700 actions, preventing 3,503 pounds of food waste and avoiding 7,270 pounds of CO₂ emissions.

By engaging residents through these challenges, the counties continue to make waste reduction more accessible and impactful.



Celebration of Contributions from Commissioner Reinhardt

Ramsey County Commissioner Victoria Reinhardt retired at the end of 2024. The Partnership expresses profound gratitude for her outstanding public service and her tireless support for public policies that furthered the adoption of sustainable solutions to manage solid waste across the state.

Commissioner Reinhardt served on the Partnership Board since its formation in 2017, including three terms as chair. Her leadership at the local, regional and state levels has driven significant policy advancements, notably the Packaging Waste and Cost Reduction Act. She played a key role in securing additional SCORE funding and other resources to help counties implement state waste policies and mandates. Her efforts have advanced sustainable waste processing, strengthened product stewardship and promoted environmental and public health protections while addressing climate risks.

We thank the “Queen of Trash” for her contributions to both the Partnership and the State of Minnesota. Our communities are cleaner and healthier because of her efforts, and we wish her well.



Financials

Each year, the Partnership Board approves a budget for the following fiscal year, which aligns with the calendar year. In 2024, the Partnership budget expenditures were as follows:

Personnel	R&E staffing support planning, accounting and contract management	\$28,700
Communications	Designing of professional materials	\$9,625
Lobbying Services	Contracts with Capitol Hill Associates, Fryberger Law Firm and Larkin Hoffman	\$102,700
Product Stewardship	Communications support for the Packaging Waste and Cost Reduction Act	\$568
Wood Waste Management	Funding opportunity analysis and regional planning	\$39,940
Zero Waste Challenges	Online platform to host waste reduction challenges	\$23,850
Insurance	Organizational coverage	\$1,405
Total		\$206,788