

Partnership on Waste and Energy 2025 Annual Report

Letter from the Chair

In 2025, the Partnership on Waste and Energy (Partnership) continued advancing policies that reduce waste, improve recycling and create a more sustainable future for our communities.

Building off the achievement of extended producer responsibility laws for packaging, paper products and boat wrap, the Partnership was an active participant to ensure these laws are implemented effectively to achieve waste diversion outcomes.

The Partnership also helped to successfully advocate for the Public Utilities Commission to allow a pathway for biomass to comply under Minnesota's 100% Carbon Free Standard.

The Partnership evaluated recycling data practices and reuse measurement methods to improve reporting and tracking of progress toward the metro area's 75% recycling rate by 2030 as set by statute. Beyond this, we expanded waste diversion programs and are leaders in the search for solutions to challenges like mattresses, batteries and electronics.

The Partnership also saw organizational changes over the year. We welcomed a new commissioner, Mary Jo McGuire, to represent Ramsey County on the Partnership Board. Closing out the year, we said goodbye to Caleb Johnson, former Senior Environmental Health Program Manager with Washington County, who served as lead staff for the Partnership. We thank Caleb for his service to the Partnership and hope he and his family are enjoying their new adventures.

As we look to the future, we're dedicated to shaping a waste system that is better for our communities and the environment.



Debbie Goettel

Debbie Goettel

Hennepin County Commissioner and 2026 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 2025, the three members of the Partnership Board were Washington County Commissioner Fran Miron, Ramsey County Commissioner Mary Jo McGuire and Hennepin County Commissioner Debbie Goettel. The chair of the Partnership Board rotates annually. In 2025, the chair was Commissioner Miron. R&E serves as the administrative agent for the Partnership, providing accounting, procurement, communication and planning services.

Legislative and Policy Highlights

Through its legislative and policy 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 2025 legislative session, the Partnership worked to advance the following areas:

- Redirecting Solid Waste Management Tax receipts from the General Fund into SCORE grants to counties
- Establishing a product stewardship program for electronics and batteries
- Funding for waste prevention, reduction, recycling and recycling markets grants
- Allocating funding to address the ongoing issue of emerald ash borer and wood waste management
- Focusing resources on food waste reduction, food rescue and organics recovery
- Supporting organics management through anaerobic digestion
- Maintaining the waste management hierarchy, including the role of waste-to-energy
- Upholding all provisions of the Packaging Waste and Cost Reduction Act

Partnership Board members, staff and lobbyists engaged with policy makers on these and several other topics and continued to collaborate with partners toward common goals. In addition, the Partnership provided written and verbal testimony and created policy position statements to communicate its interests.

The Partnership joined others in successfully advocating for the Public Utility Commission to allow a pathway for biomass waste—including wood waste and mixed municipal solid waste—to comply under the 100% Carbon Free Standard adopted by the legislature in 2023.

Finally, the Partnership responded to public comment opportunities with letters to the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) advising improvements to the Preliminary Assessment report that will inform the Stewardship Plan required under the Packaging Waste and Cost Reduction Act, as well as recommending changes to the proposed plan for the first-in-the-nation boat wrap product stewardship program. The Partnership also submitted comments to the Metropolitan Council focused on waste-related elements in its Draft Comprehensive Climate Action Plan.



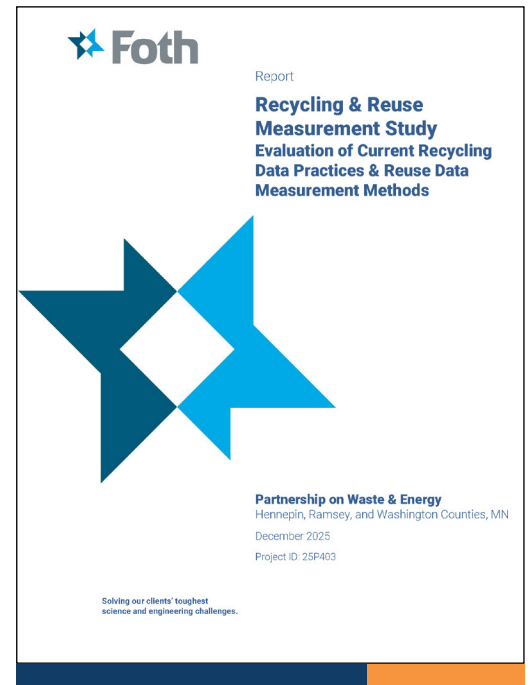
Fran Miron, Washington County commissioner and 2025 chair of the Partnership on Waste and Energy, testifies in support of HF1359 to increase the percentage of the revenues dedicated to the environmental fund. Rep. Wayne Johnson, left, sponsors the bill. (Photo by Michele Jokinen)

Measurement Study

In 2025, the Partnership contracted Foth to evaluate recycling data practices and reuse measurement methods across the seven metro counties. This work supports efforts to improve reporting and better tracking of progress toward the metro area's 75% recycling rate by 2030 as set by statute.

The measurement study was completed in three phases. Phase 1 included engagement with all seven metro counties and the MPCA to understand current recycling and reuse data practices. In Phase 2, Foth analyzed available data to identify gaps, inconsistencies and differences in how counties collect and report information. Phase 3 focused on reuse, including an audit of regional reuse entities and a survey of their measurement practices.

The report identifies key challenges, including inconsistent data collection, gaps in available data and limited methods for measuring reuse. It recommends standardizing recycling data practices, improving data sharing and reporting and advancing a reuse measurement framework. These actions provide a clear path forward for strengthening data systems and supporting progress toward regional goals.

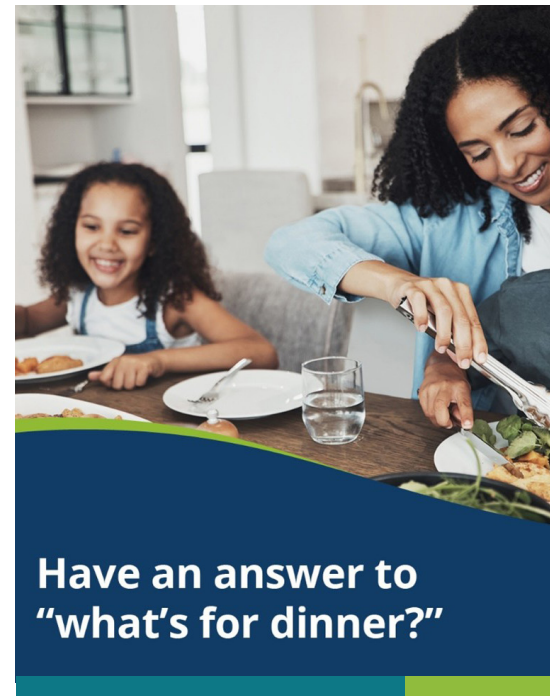


Zero Waste Challenges

In 2025, the Partnership continued efforts to engage residents in food waste and plastics reduction through its second year of online behavior-change challenges.

In February, the **Plastic-Free Challenge** educated residents on plastic recycling and reduction. A total of 46 local organizations such as workplaces, cities, watershed districts and low-waste stores partnered to connect with their audiences, spreading the word, leading teams and hosting seven educational events. Nearly 1,700 participants completed 21,494 actions, which resulted in the estimated avoidance of 13,000 pounds of CO2 emissions and over 9,900 single-use plastic items. Participants also shared their opinions and asked for change: they contacted 27 public officials or leaders and took 243 advocacy actions.

The **Stop Food Waste Challenge** took place in August and helped residents plan, prep, cook and store their food. It featured 15 events hosted by some of its 38 partner organizations. About 350 participants completed 2,066 actions, resulting in an estimated avoidance of over 967 pounds of wasted food and 1,900 pounds of CO2 emissions. These engaged residents made their stance on wasting food heard by taking 226 advocacy actions.



Financials

Each year, the Partnership Board approves a budget for the following fiscal year, which aligns with the calendar year. In 2025, the Partnership budget expenditures were as follows:

Personnel	R&E staffing support for planning, accounting and contract management	\$29,700
Communications	Updated designs and publication of the legislative platform and policy position statements	\$300
Lobbying Services	Contracts with lobbying firms Capitol Hill Associates, Fryberger Law Firm and Larkin Hoffman	\$124,540
Product Stewardship	Product Stewardship Institute membership for all three counties and R&E	\$9,000
Commercial Recycling Measurement Study	Contract with Foth focused on evaluating and improving the accuracy and completeness of recycling and reuse data collection and reporting across the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area	\$25,000
Hazardous Waste Online Training	Contract with Fredrickson Learning for translation file preparation	\$750
Zero Waste Challenges	Contract with EcoChallenge.org for online platform to host Plastic-Free Challenge and Stop Food Waste Challenge	\$24,410
Insurance	Organizational insurance	\$1,452
Total		\$215,152