

NEWMOA & NERC Joint Strategic Action Plan 2018 – 2022

Working Together on Sustainable Materials Management



Approved by the NEWMOA Board of Directors on June 9, 2017

Approved by the NERC Board of Directors on June 14, 2017

Connecticut | Maine | Maryland | Massachusetts | Delaware | New Hampshire | New Jersey | New York
Pennsylvania | Rhode Island | Vermont

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Background

The Northeast Waste Management Officials' Association (NEWMOA) and the Northeast Recycling Council (NERC) are non-profit organizations, each with extensive expertise and several decades of taking action on materials management. At times various entities have asked about “the distinctions between the organizations” and “opportunities to collaborate”. This Strategic Action Plan sets out to address both of these important questions, as well as to articulate a future vision of success in fulfilling our missions built upon collaboration and expertise sharing. The goal of the Plan is to further each of our missions and strengthen each organization through collaboration.

NERC's mission is to: promote sustainable materials management by supporting traditional and innovative solid waste best practices, focusing on waste prevention, toxics reduction, reuse, recycling and organics recovery.

NEWMOA mission is to: provide a strategic forum for effectively solving environmental problems through collaborative regional initiatives that advance pollution prevention and sustainability, promote safer alternatives to toxic materials in products, identify and assess emerging contaminants, facilitate adaption to climate change, mitigate greenhouse gas sources, promote reuse and recycling of wastes and diversion of organics; support proper management of hazardous and solid wastes, and facilitate clean-up of contaminant releases to the environment.

Overlapping Areas of Interest & Activity

NEWMOA and NERC operate in similar geographic regions¹ and involve many of the same state agencies. Both organizations help state programs and others in the Northeast, as well as nationally, to develop and implement sustainable materials management and pollution prevention (P2) strategies, including source reduction, reuse, diversion of organics/food for composting or anaerobic digestion, recycling, environmentally preferable purchasing, toxics in products, and decreasing the toxicity of the solid waste stream. For example, both groups provide technical assistance and training for local, state, and regional programs and the private sector on various waste and prevention-related topics; support national listservs; and hold webinars workshops, conferences, and meetings that are of interest to each other's members. Both organizations also focus on supporting implementation of product stewardship programs and food waste/organics diversion.

What Makes Each Organization Unique

Differences between the organizations include geographic area, Board membership, and membership base. NERC serves a slightly larger geographic area and includes private sector members within its governing Board. NEWMOA's Board includes the directors of the members' states waste and pollution prevention programs. NERC's Board includes managers of state sustainable materials management programs as well as Ex Officio board members that are not affiliated with state programs.

Other differences include the topics that are covered and strategies that are pursued. NEWMOA's focus includes industrial and commercial hazardous waste management, Brownfields, and contaminated site clean-up in addition to the topics outlined above. NERC has a focus on capacity enhancement: recycling markets, the

¹ NERC's member states are: Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont. NEWMOA's member states are: Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, and Vermont.

broader recycling industry, and the supply of materials for recycling. NERC coordinates with the recycling and related industries. NERC generally focuses on supporting voluntary programs although it provides services that support state programs in their implementation of several producer responsibility laws. NEWMOA supports state implementation of waste policies and laws and regulatory and enforcement programs as well as voluntary programs. NEWMOA facilitates interaction and communication between state environmental agencies and the EPA. NERC facilitates public-private partnerships and engagement.

NEWMOA's Unique Strengths

- Supports the states' enforcement, regulatory, and policy interests and coordinates development of harmonized policy initiatives.
- Collects and analyzes data and facilitates discussion about measuring the impacts of sustainable materials management.
- Prepares comments on federal rules and policy proposals.
- Facilitates the Northeast Pollution Prevention (P2) Resource Exchange (P2RX) Center.
- Manages the Interstate Mercury Education & Reduction Clearinghouse (IMERC).
- Manages the Interstate Chemicals Clearinghouse (IC2).
- Manages the Zero Waste Connection and National Sustainable Lodging Network.
- Sponsors regional Workgroups to address a wide variety of waste and prevention issues.

NERC's Unique Strengths

- Supports State and Advisory Members on issues related to recycling market development.
- Promotes regional and national multi-stakeholder dialogues and voluntary initiatives.
- Manages the Toxics in Packaging Clearinghouse (TPCH).
- Manages the Electronics Recycling Coordination Clearinghouse (ERCC).
- Hosts the State Electronics Challenge (SEC).
- Holds semi-annual regional conferences.
- Offers consulting services for public and private sector groups.

Priorities for Both Organizations

Materials management encompasses a wide spectrum of commodities; while NERC and NEWMOA monitor this wide range of products, there are times when certain ones demand focused attention, often due to the changing demands of the market, emerging environmental challenges, or technological advances. As a result, the NERC and NEWMOA Boards regularly identify priorities upon which the respective organizations decide to take action.

Joint NEWMOA – NERC Priorities 2018 - 2022

Food Scraps Reduction, Recovery & Management
Recyclables Collection & Impacts on Manufacturing & End-Users
Product Stewardship
Climate & Impacts on the Recycling & Solid Waste Infrastructure
Construction & Demolition Materials

Strategy for Moving Forward Together

In order to better serve and further their missions, and given the opportunities for action presented by the synergies between NERC and NEWMOA's interests, memberships, and activities, this Strategic Action Plan describes joint initiatives proposed for the next five years that seek to enhance the effectiveness of both organizations, as well as provide value to their members.

In 2014, NEWMOA and NERC adopted a [Memorandum of Agreement](#) (MOA) to demonstrate a commitment to collaboration and information sharing. This Strategic Action Plan builds upon that Agreement. As articulated in the MOA, there are several key principles that inform this Plan, including:

- Leveraging each other's expertise and experience will benefit the health and environmental quality of the region by ensuring that the organizations do not undertake similar projects without first establishing a clear distinction between such efforts;
- Collaborating on initiatives and projects where both organizations have an interest is encouraged; and
- Communicating regularly to share ideas and information benefits both organizations' membership.

Collaboration between NERC and NEWMOA may be accomplished by:

- Promoting each other's events and activities and co-sponsoring such events, where appropriate;
- Looking for joint funding opportunities in support of new initiatives; and
- Sharing reports and other information resources, including providing links to each other's websites.

To implement the MOA, the Executive Directors have been meeting in person or through conference calls three or more times per year to discuss common areas of interest and opportunities for collaboration. Those calls have contributed greatly to the development of this Strategic Action Plan.

NERC and NEWMOA agree to collaborate in their efforts to address the following materials management issues. These efforts will include all 11 of the NERC-states so that the benefit of this joint initiative impacts the wider region.

Implementation by each organization of the actions outlined below are contingent upon success in attracting funding.

Food Scraps Reduction, Recovery & Management

According to recent EPA and Department of Agriculture (USDA) studies, 40 percent of the food produced in the U.S. is not eaten. There are numerous untapped opportunities to recover this food to feed people and animals. EPA estimates that about 15 percent of the municipal solid waste stream is food waste². Under the EPA “Food Recovery Hierarchy”, priority for use of unwanted food should first be to feed people, then feed animals, and then directed to anaerobic digestion facilities or composting; and the last management priority is combustion/landfilling. When food waste is landfilled, it contributes to the production of methane, a potent greenhouse gas (GHG). Landfills are a significant contributor of anthropogenic GHGs. By contrast, food waste that is captured before it is discarded can feed those in need or be transformed into value-added products. After it is discarded, food waste can produce nutrient rich soil through composting, or energy when diverted to an anaerobic digester (AD).

The EPA and USDA have established a national goal to reduce food waste by 50 percent by 2030. NEWMOA and NERC support actions in the Northeast to help achieve this objective. The organizations commit to the following joint actions, subject to funding, with a focus on maximizing food donation, where feasible, and waste diversion to composting and anaerobic digestion:

Short-term³

- Form a joint food waste workgroup.
- Create a web page for their websites that includes links to existing state resources that identify food donation locations, commercial composting, and AD facilities in the region.
- Catalogue funding opportunities for generators and developers of food de-packaging technologies/facilities, AD and composting facilities, including support for conducting waste audits.

Longer-term

- Develop and implement technical assistance and education programs to assist large consumers of food to reduce waste, divert unwanted food to food banks, and ship their remaining food waste to compost or AD facilities.
- Adopt consistent language/symbols/coloring across the region for food scrap collection at large generators and for curbside residential collection.
- Identify and publicize best practices for de-packaging packaged foods, including the financial impacts and return on investment.
- Provide assistance and information sharing opportunities to help state programs update and implement composting regulations, develop best management practices for communities with small operations, and enhance their technical capacity to review technologies and compliance.
- Investigate and publicize best management practices for managing residuals from AD operations.
- Convene a meeting/workshop with a wide range of state agency officials, such as transportation agencies and other organizations, to develop strategies for diverting food waste to higher uses and for increasing use of compost and residuals from AD operations.
- Identify and promote markets for finished compost.
- Help border communities identify the cross-border/interstate waste sheds and end-users for organics management projects.

² www3.epa.gov/epawaste/nonhaz/municipal/

³ Within 1 year, as unlikely to require outside or significant funding.

- Research possible emerging contaminants and invasive species that could impact the uses of food waste, composted materials, and AD residuals and share results regionally; develop guidance for managing these problems.

Recyclables Collection Strategies & Impacts on Manufacturing/End-users

Single stream/zero sort and single sort recyclables collection practices have had a significant impact on overall recyclables collection tonnage and the materials that are shipped to various markets to use in making new products. The market has experienced a mixed response to this stream of commingled materials, as compared to the earlier “sort at curb” or “source separated” recyclables programs.

Glass presents significant challenges at single stream materials recovery facilities (SSMRFs). Problems include broken glass that contaminates paper, plastic, and other materials limiting its potential for recycling. Conversely, plastic and paper shreds from the processing of the mixed recyclables can become mixed with glass, contaminating it and reducing its commodity value. The resulting lower quality materials and higher residue rates can raise processing cost at SSMRFs and lower their revenues from the sale of the materials. At times, this can lead to the elimination of glass as an “acceptable” recyclable.

Plastic and paper packaging constitute a significant percentage of municipal solid waste that is not being captured and recycled to its fullest capacity. At the same time, this stream is rapidly changing as more packaging is made from lighter composite materials that frequently are not recyclable with current technologies.

NEWMOA and NERC commit to the following joint actions to help address some of the unintended impacts of single stream recycling:

Short-term:

- Support information sharing on emerging technologies to enhance material processing at MRFs and improve quality of output.
- Support information sharing and networking with state programs around the country that are making a significant commitment to sustainable materials management including examining ways to solve the challenges associated with lower quality recyclables.

Longer-term:

- Facilitate a regional dialogue to achieve agreement among MRFs, states, and communities on a set of materials that will be universally accepted as part of municipal recycling programs.
- Research and promote strategies to support recycling markets for specific materials, such as glass.

Product Stewardship

NEWMOA and NERC support product stewardship as a strategy for improving the management of certain waste streams, increasing recycling, and creating greater economic value. Both organizations have adopted a definition of product stewardship as “the act of minimizing health, safety, environmental, and social impacts, and maximizing economic benefits of a product and its packaging throughout all lifecycle stages. The producer of the product has the greatest ability to minimize adverse impacts, but other stakeholders, such as suppliers, retailers, government, and consumers, may also play a role.” Both groups believe product stewardship can be implemented through either voluntary programs or legal requirements. Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) is defined as a mandatory type of product stewardship that includes, at a minimum, the requirement

that the producer's responsibility for its product extends to post consumer management of that product. There are two related features of product stewardship: (1) shifting financial and management responsibility, with government oversight, upstream to the producer and away from the public sector; and (2) providing incentives to producers to incorporate environmental considerations in the design of their products. Several commodities have the focus of attention in the region, and continue to be of interest to the states. These include: carpets, packaging, paint, textiles, e-scrap⁴, mattresses, and sharps.

NEWMOA and NERC commit to the following joint actions to help states and private sector entities implement product stewardship programs:

Long-term:

- Hold periodic meetings of the state product stewardship councils, local and state officials, and sustainable material management professionals to share experiences, priorities, and recommendations for action; gather ideas and feedback from stakeholders on potential product stewardship initiatives and strategies.
- Explore opportunities for states to coordinate and harmonize their product stewardship programs.
- Create a forum for sharing information on the success and challenges of stewardship programs in the region and criteria for success.
- Identify the opportunities, challenges, and barriers associated with product stewardship, for the greatest benefit to sustainable materials management and increased recycling.
- Identify opportunities and challenges for regional product stewardship initiatives.

Climate Change & Impacts on the Recycling & Solid Waste Infrastructure

Municipal solid waste (MSW) and construction and demolition (C&D) debris facilities, including landfills, combustors, transfer stations, material recycling facilities (MRFs), materials recyclers, and others may be vulnerable to the impacts of rising sea levels and frequent and more powerful storms. This infrastructure is essential during and after climate-related adverse weather events to handle the large quantities of disaster debris that are generated. State and local governments must prepare and plan for these situations to ensure the safe and proper handling of this material and to maximize as much recycling of it as feasible.

EPA's evaluation of the full lifecycle greenhouse gas impacts of products and materials generated and consumed in the U.S. estimated that approximately 35 – 46 percent of the GHG emissions in the country can be attributed to the manufacturing, use, and disposal of goods and materials. NEWMOA, NERC, and many others have long advocated for a significant role for materials management in efforts to mitigate climate change⁵, as well as recognition of the value of these contributions. Most of the states in the Northeast have included strategies to promote waste reduction and increase reuse and recycling in their climate action plans, and state-wide solid waste management plans address mitigation of GHG emissions. The agencies' efforts to implement these plans have benefitted from regional information sharing, networking, and development of new metrics and analysis.

In order to broaden the conversation and understanding of the relationship between materials management and climate change, NEWMOA and NERC commit to engage in conversations with other regional organizations, such as the Northeast Committee on the Environment (NECOE), Northeast States for

⁴ Also known as e-waste.

⁵ See www.newmoa.org/publications/NEWMOAClimate-WasteActionPlan.pdf

Coordinated Air Use Management (NESCAUM), and New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission (NEIWPPC) on this topic and to pursue the following joint actions:

Education

Short-term

- Organize and hold regional webinars on climate and materials management, and potentially future national webinars.
- Write and publish articles/editorials about the connection between materials management and climate change.

Long-term

- Actively seek opportunities to explain the connection between materials management and climate change to such audiences as the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI), Council of State Governments, the Northeast Committee on the Environment (NECOE), New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers, EPA Regions 1, 2, and 3, and other groups in order to inform their understanding of the role of sustainable materials management and to expand the opportunities for NERC and NEWMOA to become actively involved in related climate change initiatives.

Adaption

Short-term

- Identify waste facilities that are particularly vulnerable to sea level rise and extreme weather events.

Long-term

- Identify needs for resiliency planning for high risk sites, research available resiliency strategies that waste facilities can adopt, and work with facilities to implement resiliency measures.
- Help state programs to increase the capacity for the proper processing, reuse, and recycling of MSW, C&D materials, and other disaster debris wastes.

Documentation & Justification

Short-term

- Support information sharing and networking with state programs around the country that are studying and documenting the impacts of sustainable materials management on greenhouse gas emissions.
- Develop methods to track and report GHG benefits of waste reduction, reuse, composting, AD, and recycling.

Long-term

- Create information resources and tools that demonstrate the relationship between materials, materials management, and climate mitigation.
- Identify goals for greenhouse gas emission reductions in the region resulting from sustainable materials management programs in order to support and enhance the achievement of regional greenhouse gas reduction goals.
- Create a template for state and local action for materials management strategies as a tool in climate change mitigation and facilitate collaboration among states and stakeholders on implementation.

Construction & Demolition (C&D) Materials

C&D debris associated with construction and demolition of buildings is usually disposed of in landfills. But available landfill space is becoming increasingly limited in most of the northeast, and public opposition has severely limited the siting of new landfills. NEWMOA's 2009 report estimated that approximately 10 percent of architectural C & D generation was recovered for an end use outside of a landfill in 2006.⁶ Metal was the only C&D material recovered at a significant percentage of estimated generation. There is significant potential to increase recovery and reuse of most C&D materials.

NEWMOA and NERC commit to the following joint actions to help increasing reuse and recycling of architectural C&D materials:

Short-term:

- Create a web page for use on both organization's websites that has links to existing resources for C&D debris management.
- Promote the results and recommendations from the Massachusetts study of C&D materials markets.
- Examine the results of NEWMOA's most recent C&D materials data for possible actions.

Longer-term:

- Convene a meeting/workshop with state transportation agency officials to encourage the use of C&D materials in road bed construction and for erosion control.
- Implement strategies that are identified as result of Massachusetts' study and data review.

Implementation

NEWMOA and NERC agree to undertake the following measures to implement this Action Plan:

- Seek funding individually and jointly to support the actions outline in this Plan.
- Annually review the Strategic Action Plan with each organization's Board of Directors to ensure its accuracy and appropriateness given changing circumstances.
- Form cooperative working groups to oversee and evaluate the work on each of the issues.
- Hold 5 - 6 conference calls a year between the Executive Directors of both organizations to review the actions undertaken to implement the Plan and develop recommendations for consideration by their respective Boards, as well as 1 – 2 joint calls of the Boards
- Provide regular reports to their Boards on the progress toward implementing the Plan and seek recommendations and feedback on interim actions and strategies.
- Develop measures for evaluating progress toward addressing the issues and topics identified in the Plan and track those measures, as appropriate.

⁶ See www.newmoa.org/solidwaste/CDReport2006DataFinalJune302009.pdf; the report analyzes and presents 2006 data provided by NEWMOA's members.