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2006 Annual Report

Wisconsin's Waste and Materials Management Program

Waste and Materials Management Program 2006 Annual Report

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Welcome

Welcome to the 2006 Waste and Materials Management Program annual report. Our vision of "moving toward zero waste" is a cornerstone of our work with stakeholders to manage waste as resource materials for others and in ways that protect the quality of Wisconsin's public health and the environment for future generations.

This has been a year of transition. The first change we initiated relates to our organizational structure and some of our management systems. These modifications improve our ability to:

- maintain a high level of environmental and human health protection;
- innovate using green tier and other voluntary programs;
- adapt to changing needs of stakeholders;
- streamline our business functions, such as plan approval;
- respond to stakeholder issues effectively; and
- match our resources to the highest priority work around the state.

We welcome your thoughts and ideas about how we are doing.

In September, we were ISO 14001-recertified under the rigorous international standard for environmental performance. As many of you in the business and local government communities understand, this takes a commitment to good management, transparency and reducing the environmental impact of the work we do. We continue to focus on our priorities by working with local governments and others to get the word out on the harmful effects of burning garbage and waste; working with landfill operators to reduce the fugitive emissions of global warming gases; partnering with stakeholders to use such resources as construction and demolition waste or electronics waste for products that benefit the economy of our state; and making our information available to the public through the Web and other communication tools.

Also setting the stage for change and managing waste as materials is the work of the Governor's Task Force on Waste Materials Recovery and Disposal. The group's recommendations to improve recycling and reuse of materials and better manage the waste we create in Wisconsin will shape waste resources and management for future generations.

Take a moment to read the many accomplishments we made together in waste materials use and management!

Suzanne Bangert, Director
Bureau of Waste and Materials Management

Program mission and structure

We are the Waste and Materials Management Program, proud members of the Air and Waste Division of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. Guided by a vision of "moving toward zero waste," we work with businesses, local government, the public and interest group representatives to promote the best use of materials. We encourage the management of waste as a resource to help ensure a clean and healthy Wisconsin for future generations.

Through a central bureau, five regional headquarter offices and 11 service centers, staff work in partnership with an array of interested groups statewide. We focus on hazardous and solid waste management, recycling and nonmetallic mining. Within these program areas, we commit to streamlining regulatory processes, inviting public involvement in policy development, providing public access to information on the Internet and encouraging businesses to go beyond compliance. More specifically, we strive to reduce illegal open burning, minimize landfill gas and groundwater impacts, ensure owner financial responsibility for solid and hazardous waste facilities, and restore sand and gravel pits to natural areas with ponds, prairie or other wildlife habitat.

Through policy development, technical assistance, educational outreach and compliance assurance, the Waste and Materials Management Program encourages the reduction, recycling and reuse of wastes as raw material for new products. We believe when today's waste becomes tomorrow's resources, Wisconsin's communities and businesses benefit from a more efficient economy and a cleaner environment.

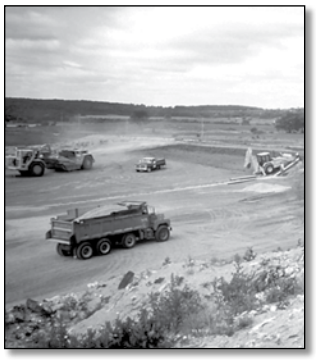
We encourage the management of waste as a resource to help ensure a clean and healthy Wisconsin for future generations.

Employee of the Year

Since 1998, the Waste and Materials Management Program has selected an Employee of the Year. The 2006 winner is Ken Hein, a waste management specialist in Southeast Region who is viewed as an innovative problem solver by his co-workers, staff and managers in other programs. External customers have noted that he anticipates potential problems and finds ways to bring competing interests together before issues become polarized.

Areas of focus

Solid Waste Management



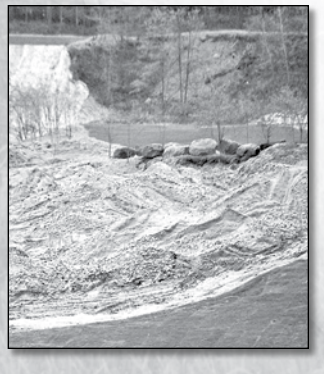
Our program ensures proper management of solid waste through thorough, yet practical, regulation of Wisconsin's municipal solid waste, industrial waste, and construction and demolition waste landfills. Staff license solid waste facilities; close poorly located or operated facilities; and ensure new facilities are properly located, designed, constructed, operated and maintained. Emphasis is on diverting waste through the beneficial use of industrial byproducts to preserve resources, conserve energy and reduce the need for additional landfills.

Hazardous Waste Management

Our role at the state level is to govern the generation, transportation, storage, treatment and disposal of hazardous waste throughout Wisconsin. We work with generators and facilities to ensure proper management of hazardous waste and aim to prevent threats to human health and protect Wisconsin's ground and surface water, air and soil.

Recycling

We promote and regulate recycling and perform reviews of recycling and compost sites. We encourage innovative approaches to minimize waste generation and divert materials from landfills. Focus areas include streamlining recycling regulations, encouraging reuse of construction and demolition debris, and diverting organic wastes and toxics from landfills. Recycling and reuse cut greenhouse gas emissions, save energy, preserve our natural resources, and contribute to Wisconsin's economy through job and business creation.



Mining

Our program regulates the environmental aspects of metallic and nonmetallic mining. This includes working to return closed mines to productive, healthy land; and ensuring that nonmetallic mining programs, which are administered locally, are consistent across the state. Some 2,500 nonmetallic mines throughout Wisconsin yield products as varied as sand, horticultural peat, agricultural lime, gravel and dolomite used in road building. At present, there are no metallic mining sites operating in the state. We do, however, monitor reclamation and remediation activity at three closed metallic mines.

Photos from top: Landfill—DNR stock photo; pharmaceutical collection—DNR photo by Michael Miller; construction recycling—photo courtesy WasteCap Wisconsin; quarry reclamation—DNR stock photo

Program costs and staffing

Expenditures for the Waste and Materials Management Program were $6.6 million in fiscal year 2005–2006. This supports the activities of 78 staff, including engineers, hydrogeologists, waste management specialists, information technology specialists, program assistants and managers. As Figure 1 shows, half of program expenditures go toward solid waste activities and slightly less than one-third go toward hazardous waste activities. The rest of our expenditures go toward recycling (15 percent), metallic and nonmetallic mining (4 percent), and administration (2 percent).

These expenditures do not include the financial assistance DNR provides to local governments for recycling or the Waste Reduction and Recycling Demonstration Grants, since DNR's Community Financial Assistance Program administers these funds.

Our program's work covers a range of activities, from inspections and compliance assistance to communications and outreach. More than 60 percent of our staff time and activities are used to prevent groundwater contamination and other pollution (through plan review, inspections and compliance assistance) and to provide the public, partners and regulated facilities with information, tools and guidelines to reduce waste and prevent environmental contamination.

Figure 2 shows the percentage of total staff time devoted to each function across the program during fiscal year 2005-2006.

Figure 1: Expenditures by program area

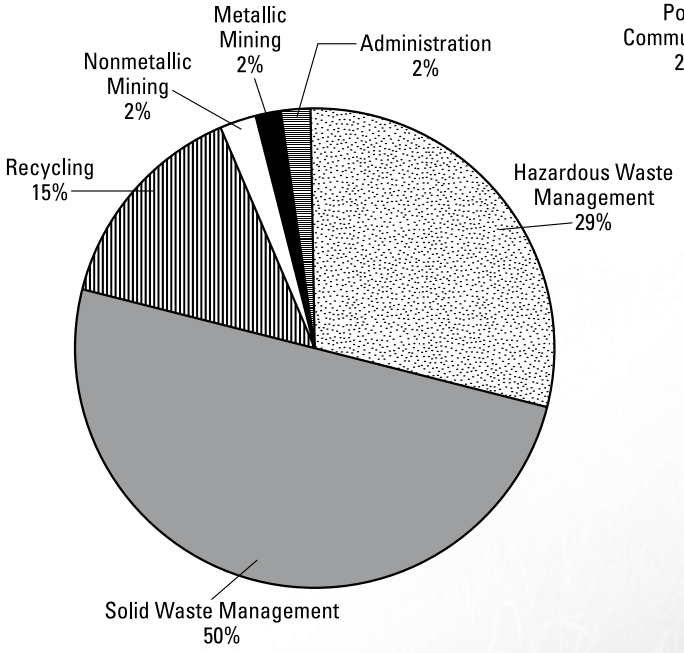
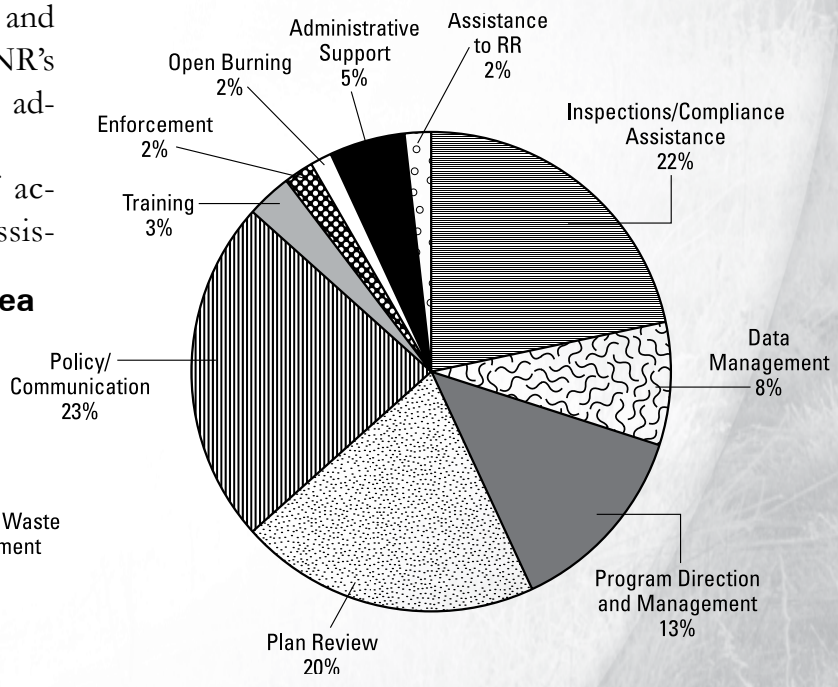


Figure 2: Time spent on program activities



Source: Waste and Materials Management Program
Note: RR stands for Remediation and Redevelopment

Program impacts

At home, at work, on the road and at play, each of us has potential to create waste and to contribute to waste reduction and safe disposal solutions. Our staff are responsible for monitoring and guiding waste and materials management in the right direction. Since we do not run fleets of garbage trucks, market recyclables or ship hazardous waste for reclamation, we can only reach our larger goals for waste reduction and environmental health by forming partnerships with a wide range of people, including waste generators, the recycling and waste management industries, local governments, product manufacturers, associations and grass-roots organizations.

As an example, through discussion and consultation with an advisory group on illegal open burning of garbage, we set a goal to reduce public exposure to toxins by 50 percent by 2015. Last year our program responded to more than 130 open burning complaints from citizens. These represent a small fraction of the thousands of illegal burning incidents that occur around the state annually. An "information and education" approach is the best way to discourage illegal burning and encourage recycling and proper disposal, as we learned in the early years of implementing Wisconsin's successful recycling program. Each region completed one or more educational initiatives in 2006 to reduce open burning, offering assistance to local governments interested in reducing open burning and providing alternatives.

Program staff work with local governments on projects such as the reclamation of former quarries and other mining sites, including this one in Jefferson County. DNR photo by Thomas Portle.

DNR staff worked with local partners to return recycling to the Wisconsin State Fair in 2006, keeping 22 tons of cardboard and 3.2 tons of plastics and glass out of landfills.

Our regulatory activities also contribute to preventing pollution and protecting public health. As an example, in 2006 staff completed 303 compliance evaluation inspections at facilities that generate, treat, store or dispose of hazardous waste. Ninety of these inspections occurred at facilities that had never been inspected before, as part of an initiative to ensure that small businesses understand their obligations to manage hazardous waste safely and legally. We also responded to 67 citizen complaints alleging improper hazardous waste handling or management.

When tornadoes, fires or other disasters leave debris and ruined buildings in their wake, our staff help Emergency Management and local government officials arrange the cleanup, proper disposal and, for some materials, recycling. During 2006, staff responded to the explosions at The Falk Company in Milwaukee and in Ellison Bay, Door County.

Environmental results

Our program has an ISO 14001-certified Environmental Management System (EMS). We use the EMS to set our environmental goals and define measurements to assess the environmental results.

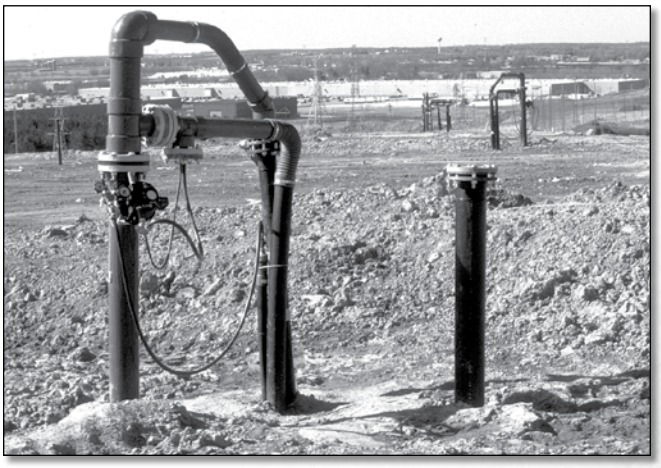
Our program vision is "Moving Wisconsin Toward Zero Waste." Just as a broad group of stakeholders were involved in developing the vision, so achieving tangible results depends on the efforts of many groups and individuals from across the state.

Under this vision, we chose six indicators to assess whether the tools the program is using achieve the intended environmental results (see below).

For each indicator, we are defining specific goals, setting baselines against which to compare future measurements and defining how we will achieve the goals. Here is an example using the landfill gas indicator, which deals with the unintended release of gases such as methane produced during decomposition.

Year 2015 goal: Reduce by 50 percent the cubic feet of landfill gas released, using a 2004 estimate as the baseline.

Baseline measure: Modeling indicated that 2.4 billion cubic feet of fugitive gas were released from landfills in three regions of the state in 2004. A statewide baseline will be completed in 2007.



A dual leachate and gas extraction well at the Kestrel Hawk Park Landfill in Racine. DNR stock photo.

Means to achieve goal:

- Collecting and evaluating monitoring data
- Posting data on the Internet
- Improving compliance with landfill operation plans
- Improving our plan review

2006 progress: Models of landfill gas generation and extraction-rate data for active municipal landfills in three of our five regions indicated that the amount of landfill gas extracted and treated in 2005 increased by over 20 percent from 2004 levels and that fugitive gas emissions dropped by 25 percent. Several landfills upgraded their gas extraction systems during 2005.

Environmental results indicators

1. Tons of solid waste generated annually and quantities disposed, recycled or reused
2. Pounds of hazardous wastes generated annually and quantity reused
3. Tons of industrial byproducts generated annually and quantity beneficially used
4. Cubic feet of gas generated annually at municipal landfills and quantity released into the air
5. Groundwater quality around active and inactive landfills
6. Public exposure to toxins from illegal open burning

By the numbers

Top: Workers on a sort line. Photo courtesy WM Recycle America. **Bottom:** Recycling container at the 2006 Wisconsin State Fair. DNR photo by Nancy Gloe.

Wisconsin has a well-developed infrastructure for waste materials disposal and recycling. Here are some facts and figures about what the Waste and Materials Management Program regulates.

Solid waste

- **11 million tons** of solid waste (municipal and industrial) disposed of in Wisconsin landfills in 2005 (79 percent from in-state sources and 19 percent from out-of-state sources)
- **67** operating licensed landfills, including **33 municipal solid waste** landfills and **34 industrial waste** landfills
- **29** approved construction and demolition waste sites
- **45** solid waste processing facilities
- **180** yard waste compost facilities
- **2** solid waste compost facilities
- **2** waste-to-energy incinerators
- **600** closed landfills monitored regularly to detect potential groundwater and environmental contamination

Hazardous waste

- **450,000 tons** of hazardous waste transported, treated (recycled or reclaimed) or disposed of annually
- **11,000-plus** Wisconsin businesses, schools and government institutions generate hazardous waste each year
- **464** Large Quantity Generators of hazardous waste
- **1,229** Small Quantity Generators
- **9,678** Very Small Quantity Generators
- **17** licensed hazardous waste management facilities
- **6** closed hazardous waste disposal facilities monitored/inspected regularly

Recycling

- **1,062** local government responsible units with recycling programs
- **727,000 tons** of materials recycled by residential recycling programs annually
- **109** materials recovery facilities serving local recycling programs

Nonmetallic mining

- **2,500** regulated nonmetallic mining sites

Major accomplishments in 2006

Environmental Management System makes the grade

The Waste and Materials Management Program was successfully ISO 14001 recertified for our Environmental Management System (EMS). ISO 14001 is a rigorous international standard for environmental performance. Initial certification occurred in 2003 and we became the first state regulatory program in the United States to achieve it.

Through use of the EMS, we communicate with the public and regulated facilities more effectively and better understand the environmental impacts of policy development, plan review, licensing, compliance assurance and enforcement activities. We have shared priorities for protecting the environment.

Third-party auditors regularly assess our progress toward our vision of "moving toward zero waste" and achieving program priorities. In 2006, auditors highlighted the hazardous waste program and the Southeast Region's efforts to reduce open burning as noteworthy achievements. Areas cited for improvement included updating emergency preparedness and employee training plans and developing more consistent methods for landfill inspections.

Governor's Task Force completes recommendations

The Governor's Task Force on Waste Materials Recovery and Disposal published its final report, approved unanimously, in December 2006. The report contains 20 major recommendations in five broad categories: minimizing environmental, economic and social costs; enhancing producer responsibility for products; promoting effective resource recycling and recovery; promoting responsible waste disposal; and promoting ecological and environmental sustainability. The Task Force's 20 members represented diverse interests in manufacturing, municipal government, waste management, engineering and environmental protection.

We provided significant ongoing technical, administrative and outreach support to the Task Force from its inception in June 2005 through completion of its report. Over the next several years, we will continue efforts to study and implement the Task Force's recommendations, as directed by the Natural Resources Board.

Members of the Governor's Task Force on Waste Materials Recovery and Disposal. DNR photo by Robert Queen.

Residents bring computers and other electronic equipment to a collection event held by Cascade Asset Management, LLC, in Madison in November 2006. DNR photo by Robert Queen.

Midwest electronic waste policy takes step forward

Wisconsin's 7.5 million household televisions and 3.8 million household computers will need to be carefully dismantled and recycled at the end of their useful lives to avoid contaminating our environment with lead and other heavy metals. Wisconsin, Michigan, Minnesota, Illinois and Iowa collaborated to develop a framework for a coordinated policy to finance the collection and recycling of waste electronics. The Midwest E-waste Policy Initiative Statement was published in May 2006, endorsed by the member states' environmental agencies, and has since caught the interest of a number of policy-oriented organizations such as the Midwest Council of State Governments and the National Council of Environmental Legislators. Other Midwest states are interested in joining in this effort soon.

Three rule revisions help streamline processes, protect environment

Hazardous waste

Revised hazardous waste and used oil rules went into effect August 1, 2006, culminating a several-year effort. Like the old regulations, the new rules are based on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's hazardous waste and used oil rules, incorporating more recent federal rule changes and closely following the organization and content of the federal rules. The new rules reduce paperwork requirements and further encourage legitimate recycling of hazardous waste.

Landfill stability

A new administrative rule promoting landfill organic stability went into effect on December 1, 2006. The rule requires owners and operators of municipal solid waste landfills to incorporate techniques to stabilize organics (such as controlling decomposition or diverting compostable materials away from landfills) into the operation plans for their facilities.

Sand and gravel operations

Through collaboration with the Nonmetallic Mining Advisory Committee and other interested stakeholders, requirements for nonmetallic (sand and gravel) reclamation programs were improved as of December 2006. The revised rule removes outdated language, streamlines administrative procedures and provides financial assurance options for mine operators.

Assuring financial responsibility for waste facilities

In 2006, we met our goal of having large landfills (greater than 5 million cubic yards) comply with owner financial responsibility requirements, which ensure that adequate funds are available to the DNR for all necessary closure and long-term care at the facilities. To support our program's goal of "managing waste management facilities so that the affected land is returned to productive use, hazards are eliminated and the facilities are not a burden to the host community," we work to ensure that all solid waste landfills comply with financial responsibility requirements. We require owners to ensure that adequate funds are available to carry out the work if the owner does not do so. In addition to the success with large landfills, we are well on our way to achieving the goals of having all medium-size landfills comply by July 2007.

Left: Before—a county judge and local officials inspect a facility littered with plastics and garbage accumulated over many years. **Right:** After—all plastic and metal sold, garbage and asbestos removed. Photos by Dunn County Solid Waste staff.

Sale of recyclables pays for facility cleanup

The sale of recyclables from a former plastics processing site in Dunn County provided funds to clean up the fire hazards and other dangers on the site, following many unsuccessful attempts to persuade the facility's owner to clean up the site. In addition, the company will return $27,000 to the recycling demonstration grant program because of unfulfilled grant requirements.

West Central Region staff members have worked to bring a poorly managed plastics processing site into compliance since 1999. After several court orders to clean up the site and contempt fines totaling $19,200 failed to get results, a judge ordered Dunn County as receiver of the property in late 2005. During 2006, Dunn County sold the plastic and used the proceeds to clean up the site, including asbestos removal. The local fire department received some of the proceeds to offset the cost of developing a fire protection system, including a high capacity well and pump.

DNR receives award from Hospitals for a Healthy Environment

The Waste and Materials Management Program and six Wisconsin health care facilities earned Hospitals for a Healthy Environment awards in 2006. The Champions for Change award to DNR recognized our role in promoting waste reduction in the health care sector as well as in our own facilities. Several health care organizations and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency founded this program to educate health care professionals about pollution prevention opportunities and provide practical tools and resources to encourage environmental sustainability.

Crandon mine permit withdrawn, but site work continues

Although the Nicolette Mining Company withdrew its request for a permit in October 2003 and the Forest County Potawatomi and Mole Lake Chippewa tribes now own the former Crandon mine site, closeout work continues at the site. Approximately 112 monitoring wells and 54 bore holes on site were filled and abandoned in 2006.

Reclamation continues at Flambeau Mine site

Reclamation work at the Flambeau Mine site in Ladysmith continued in 2006. This included ongoing biological and vegetative monitoring to document the continued development of native grassland, woodland and wetland communities on the site. In addition, remediation of soils containing unexpectedly high concentrations of copper took place in a portion of the site. The company excavated and removed the soils during May and June 2006 and an asphalt parking lot now covers the area.

The Flambeau River Papers mill, formerly owned by the Smart Paper Company. DNR photo by Steve Ashenbrucker.

Strong comeback for bankrupt paper mill prevents pollution

When the Smart Paper Company in Price County declared bankruptcy and shut down in early 2006, Northern Region staff were concerned about possible sulfite contamination while the mill's wastewater treatment plant and landfill site lay idle. Collaborative discussions with company managers ensured continued protection of public health and the environment during this difficult time.

Staff met frequently with city officials, paper mill management and representatives of the investor group that bought the mill to address the compliance requirements of closing, restarting and transferring mill ownership. The Wisconsin Department of Justice negotiated an agreement with the new and former owners providing $200,000 for facility improvements to keep the mill's landfill and spent sulfite liquor remediation site in compliance.

By August, the mill rehired workers and resumed papermaking as Flambeau River Papers. Company managers are completing the required compliance work on schedule and are working to position the mill as a global competitor.

Collecting unused pharmaceuticals makes headlines

In response to growing concern about detectable amounts of pharmaceuticals showing up in lakes, streams and aquatic life, several local governments initiated collection events for unused pharmaceuticals in 2006. To support local programs, DNR issued guidance to ensure safe collection and environmentally sound disposal of household pharmaceuticals. The guidance includes a warning not to use the sewer system/sewage treatment facility for pharmaceuticals disposal or destruction.

Marshfield Utilities, the Marshfield Clinic and Wood County Health Department joined up with the Marshfield Groundwater Guardians to plan and implement Wisconsin's first waste pharmaceutical collection in May 2006. Two West Central Region staff volunteered to help, and learned a lot from the experience. They observed, "Many legal and logistical issues needed to be ironed out before the event took place. It could not have been successful without the support of many local businesses, utilities, law enforcement and volunteers."

Law enforcement officials show off results from the Marshfield pharmaceutical collection. DNR photo by Michael Miller.

Brown, Winnebago, Manitowoc and Rock counties and the city of Milwaukee also held collection events in 2006. Rock County reported a successful "Rx Round-Up" that collected 260 pounds of prescription/outdated drugs.

Largest river cleanup in U.S. moves ahead on Lower Fox

Removing contaminated sediments from the Lower Fox River was a major, step forward to restore a healthy environment for fish and people who like to eat fish in a river harmed by years of historical pollution. To ensure safe disposal of sediments at each stage of cleanup, Northeast Region staff worked closely with all concerned parties to develop acceptable disposal plans for sediments from different sections of the river, specifically:

- The Lower Fox River/Green Bay sectors, including one area where approximately 3.7 million cubic yards of contaminated sediment were removed for disposal. An estimated 200,000 cubic yards of this sediment contained higher levels of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and required special disposal at a Michigan facility.
- A section of the Lower Fox with less PCB-contaminated sediments, where GW Partners removed approximately two-thirds of the PCB contaminated sediment from the river. Veolia ES Solid Waste, Inc., safely disposed of the sediments at its landfill in Calumet County.

More than 3.7 million cubic yards of contaminated sediment were removed from one portion of the Lower Fox River.

What's next in 2007 and beyond

During 2007, the Waste and Materials Management Program will focus on program goals and objectives, working with businesses, local governments and non-profit organizations to:

- reduce the environmental impact of landfills, especially reducing landfill gas emissions and preventing groundwater contamination around landfills;
- eliminate illegal open burning and dumping of wastes; and
- maximize the environmental and economic benefits for Wisconsin from using waste as raw materials and increase waste material reuse and recycling 30 percent by 2015.

In addition to our ongoing work with facility inspections, plan reviews, policy development, outreach and enforcement, we will move ahead with several targeted efforts in 2007.

Response to Governor's Task Force recommendations

The program will promote efforts to study and implement recommendations from the Governor's Blue Ribbon Task Force on Waste Materials Recovery and Disposal, as directed by the Natural Resources Board. In 2007, we will work on recommendations that can be implemented without additional authorization or funding, such as reviewing engineering requirements for construction and demolition debris landfills. We look forward to working with interested non-profit organizations, local governments and businesses as we begin to implement the recommendations.

Ensuring landfill organic stability

2007 will see the first steps toward implementation of the Landfill Organic Stability Rule, which took effect in December 2006 and are designed to reduce the threat of future contamination due to organic decomposition in landfills. Eight landfills submitted their plans in early 2007. The plans describe steps landfill owners propose to take to either reduce the landfilling of biodegradable materials (such as food waste) through source separation and/or to speed up the decomposition of landfilled organic waste. Staff review and response to the first group of plans is due in spring 2007. We expect all of Wisconsin's municipal solid waste landfills will implement organic stabilization plans by 2012.

Among the recommendations of the Governor's Task Force on Waste Materials Recovery and Disposal is to review engineering requirements for construction and demolition landfills. Here, workers recycle metal on a construction site. Photo courtesy WasteCap Wisconsin.

One area of emphasis in the coming year will be enforcement of recycling at outdoor events, such as the State Fair. DNR photo by Nancy Gloe.

Reauthorization for hazardous waste management

The DNR is required to adopt rules that are at least equivalent to U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Resource Conservation and Recovery Act regulations in order to maintain Wisconsin's authority to administer the federal Hazardous Waste Program. Now that the revised hazardous waste rules are in effect, we are preparing to submit a request to EPA for reauthorization of DNR's Hazardous Waste Program. The state receives federal grant funds to implement the program, which enables regulated businesses and institutions to receive better service by being able to work directly with DNR regional staff, instead of EPA staff in Chicago.

Increasing attention to pharmaceutical waste

We will work toward solutions for reducing, managing and destroying waste drugs. This includes ongoing support for household pharmaceutical collection events and working with various interests to develop a more permanent solution for managing household pharmaceutical waste to prevent contaminating the environment. In addition, we will continue to share information and provide guidance to businesses, institutions and other non-household generators of pharmaceutical waste.

Review of Flambeau Mining request

The Flambeau Mining Company requested a Certification of Completion for reclamation (restoring the site to the approved post-mining land use) of its closed site in late 2006. We will review the request and participate in the public hearing on the matter during 2007.

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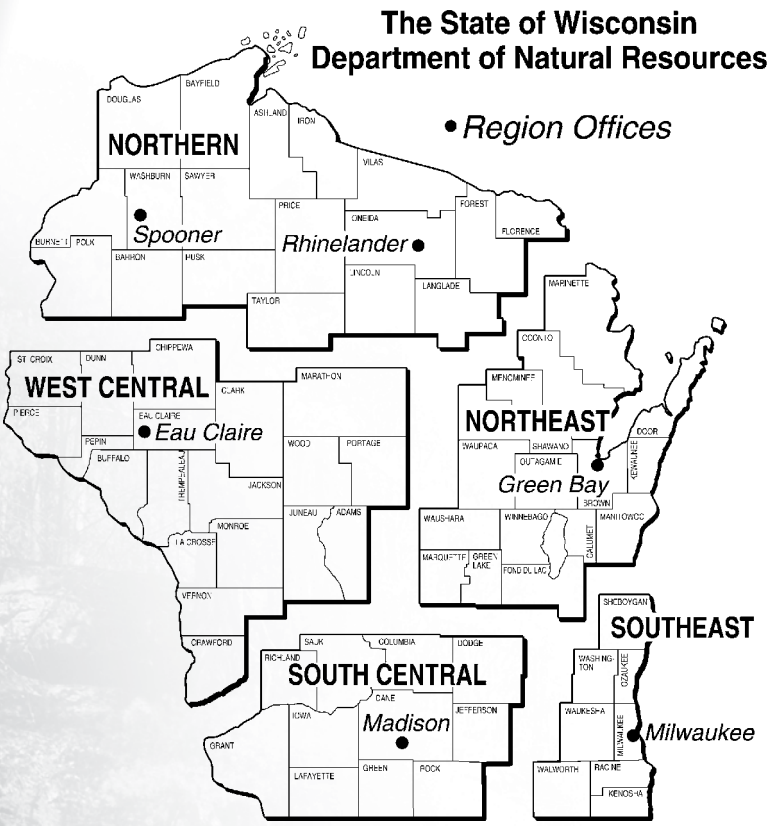
New emphasis on non-residential recycling

Wisconsin's recycling continues to enjoy strong support from local residents, with more than 90 percent of households favoring statewide recycling. With this strong foundation, it is time to bring non-residential recycling up to the same level. One first step was to review our procedures for evaluating local program operations for compliance with state and local recycling requirements, including local outreach and enforcement of recycling at commercial businesses and at outdoor events. Our next step is to develop and implement a commercial business recycling strategy, working with local governments, business sectors and recycling associations.

As we pursue these efforts and others, the year ahead will bring challenges, creative collaborations and greater insight into the waste and materials management issues facing our state. With the participation of everyone involved, together we will move toward our goal of ensuring a clean and healthy Wisconsin for future generations.

Resources and contacts



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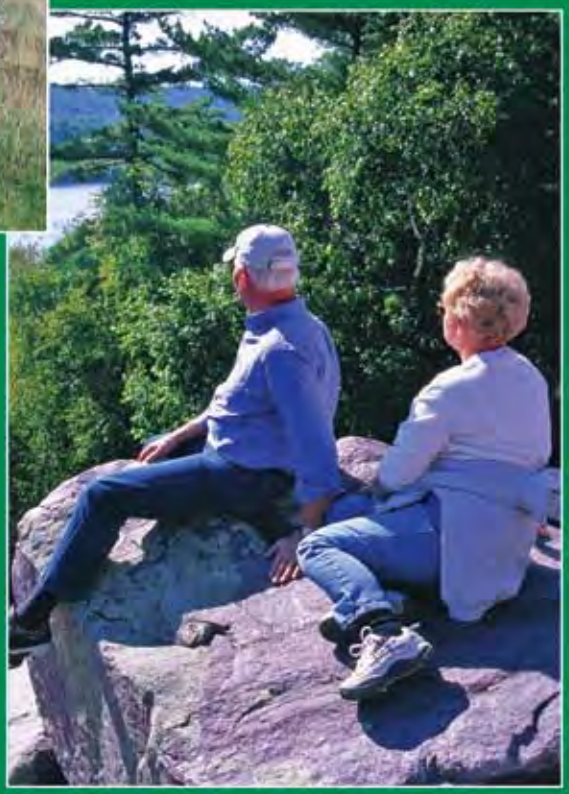

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