

## Recycling Advisory Committee (RAC) Meeting Minutes

May 14, 2025, 8:00am – 9:30am

Virtual Meeting

Minute Taker: Stephanie Wasiuk

**Members present:** Dailey Brannin, Dave Demme, Debby Galef, Tracie Gordon, Sakiko Isomichi, Debby Knight, Elka Kuhlman, Emily Lee, Richard Nurse, Carlie Peters, Diane Roseman, Meera Singh, Helen Snively, Stephanie Wasiuk

**Members absent:** Lee Elliott, Dawn Quirk, Quinten Steenhuis, Rob Vandenabeele,

**Staff Present:** Mike Orr

**Public present:** Ron Cochran (MassDEP), Courtney Forrester, Judy Nathans, Amy Waltz, Derek Li

### 1. Housekeeping

- Vote on April 9 Minutes - Approved

### 2. City Updates

- Reflections on Earth Day - very successful, well-organized, many volunteers  
Finished compost was from NH, not from Cambridge's yard waste (which goes to West Roxbury), but was considered better quality. Having more shovels helped the event move along faster. Harvard Crimson article. Continuously looking into better ways to explain anaerobic digestion to people.
- ZWMP 2.0 update - close to being finalized, needs to go to City Council for adoption between now and early June. Then can move forward with ordinance changes (property management, mandatory food waste, single-use products, name change to Waste Reduction Advisory Comm.). Decisions are ultimately up to the City Council.
- Save That Stuff has been acquired by Casella.
- Needham has banned black plastic.

### 3. Guest Speaker: Ron Cochran, MassDEP

- Slides presented by Ron (attached)
- Ron's contact info: Ron.h.cochran@mass.gov
- Topic: Waste Capacity in Massachusetts
- Of state's waste, 3 million tons goes to WTE plants, 0.5 million ton to landfills, and 2.7 million tons are exported to other states, which is almost all landfilled.
- Many of Cambridge's grant funding comes through the program with which Ron is involved.
- Construction and demolition waste are excluded from "municipal waste."
- Most of the landfills in Massachusetts are near capacity and will be closing, no others will be opened.
- Massachusetts does import a small amount of waste from RI and CT.
- Generally, New England is exporting waste and it's going further away now than it has been in the past.
- There's a risk that receiving states can stop accepting our waste.
- We know there is a gap between capacity and disposal rates, however the size of the gap could be between 700,000 tons and 2.5 million tons.
- Waste to energy credits are "fees" that waste combustion facilities have to pay, which are managed by MassDEP. Becomes funding for waste reduction activities. Not impacted by cuts to federal funding.
- MassDEP Solid Waste Master Plan focuses on ways to recycle more, divert more, and utilize new technologies.
  - Waste characterization shows organic matter is a big opportunity for reduction.
- MassDEP focuses on enforcement, education, and grant programs.
- Cambridge recognized for taking advantage of resources offered by MassDEP that really make an impact (e.g. electric compactor), becoming a leader in the state, and participating in policy and advisory committees.
- Waste characterization studies can lead to bans, more enforcement, education.
- State is aiming for 90% waste reduction by 2050, 30% by 2030.

- Discussion:
  - Concerns around incineration in regards to plastics and the impacts pollutants have on public health.
  - Broad waste hauler consolidation may impact quality of services and proper disposal. It's very important for municipalities to pay attention to the details in their contracts with haulers. MassDEP supports reviews, and can find opportunities for rebates.
  - Some states, such as Maine, are not accepting our waste - the landfills are managed privately. It's less costly to landfill waste in other states than it is to do so locally, as we have serious space constraints. Other states have more landfill capacity that will be open for a longer time. But they can regulate or decline waste coming in.
  - Medford is quickly implementing curbside composting and has been very successful!
  - Very hard to predict waste generation rates, need to find ways to divert further upstream.
  - Food waste is being considered for a state-wide ban, but currently the capacity doesn't exist. New facilities are being opened, which could help. MassDEP is trying to fund more of it at the city/town level through grants so that if it does become a state-wide ban, it would be less of a shock to the system.

#### **4. Closing**

- No public comment.

#### **5. Action Items**

- Sign up for volunteer events. Mike to ensure link is accessible to everyone. Feedback is that it's been accessible when shared via email, but not via link in the chat.

- Email Dailey if interested in volunteering in Allston for move out management.
- Mike to send out poll for availability for summer social.

Chat:

08:08:05 From Mike Orr to Everyone:

<https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2025/4/21/cambridge-earth-day-celebration/>

08:17:08 From Elka to Everyone:

needham town meeting banned black plastics this week

Emily Lee, traciegordon: ❤️

Amy Waltz: 👍

08:20:34 From Mike Orr to Everyone:

Volunteer Sign Up Sheet.xlsx

08:22:06 From Carlie to Everyone:

I echo elka

08:22:12 From Amy Waltz to Everyone:

I cannot access it either - will check email.

08:22:11 From Carlie to Everyone:

It worked in the email tho!

08:23:40 From traciegordon to Everyone:

WELCOME RON!

09:02:06 From Helen Snively to Everyone:

This convo about contracts with haulers feels a bit "in the weeds" but it's so useful for us to understand this stuff deeply.. I doubt I'll ever have to explain this to others.. but good to understand.. So thanks Ron and Mike.

09:07:54 From Meera Singh to Everyone:

Follow up to my question to Ron if there is time to answer - do the companies that import our waste in other states incinerate our waste or is it separated and the recyclables get recycled?

09:08:11 From Mike Orr to Everyone:

see here for statewide characterizations: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/summary-of-waste-combustor-class-ii-recycling-program-waste-characterization-studies/download>

09:11:21 From Helen Snively to Everyone:

thanks for this, Mike.. Answers my question well.

09:14:36 From Mike Orr to Everyone:

a more detailed link to info on characterizations. It's suppppperrrrr detailed: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/massachusetts-materials-management-capacity-study-february-2019/download>

09:22:12 From Helen Snively to Everyone:

thank you so much for this, ROn. I've learned a lot!

09:23:11 From Meera Singh to Everyone:

Thank you so much Ron - really good to hear everything you shared.

Debby Knight: 👍

09:24:33 From Helen Snively to Everyone:

imagine if we all shared that photo of the train cars full of trash!

09:29:33 From Amy Waltz to Everyone:

Would love to have it in a place where we can speak - perhaps a park with take out or the anex as a rain option.



# **Waste Capacity in Massachusetts**

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# What happens to your trash and recycling once it goes on the curb?

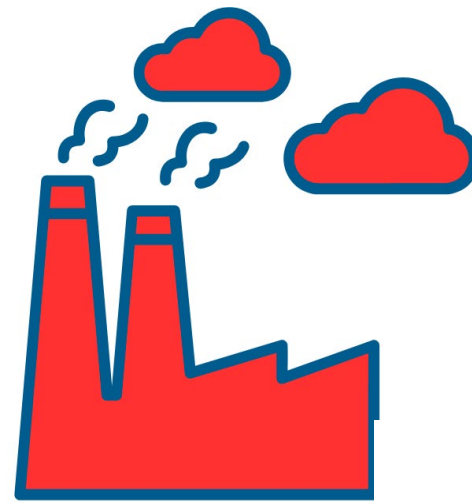
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Where does  
Massachusetts  
municipal waste  
(MSW) go?



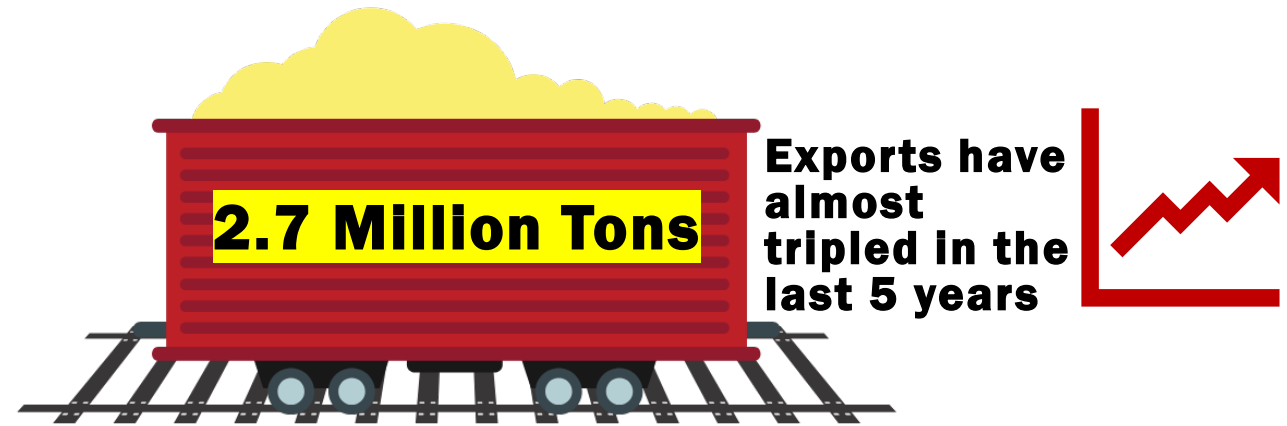
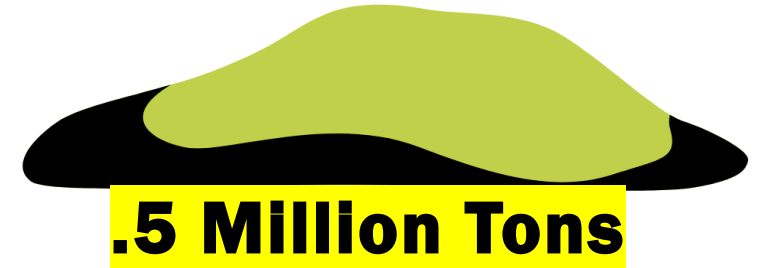
- **Combustion**
- **Landfill**
- **Exports**

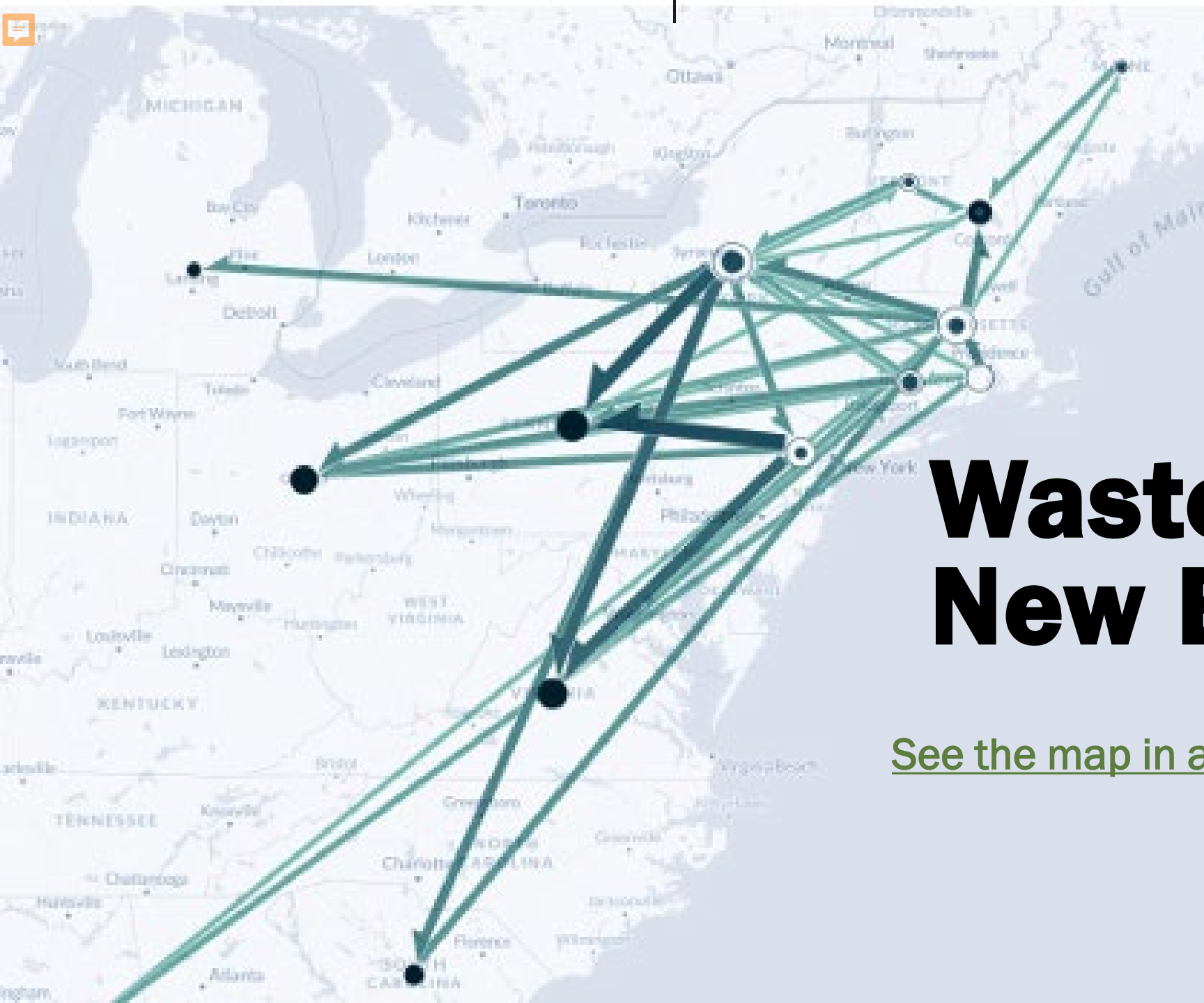




# By The Numbers 2023 Data

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# Waste Flow in New England

[See the map in action](#)



**1 Day's Worth**

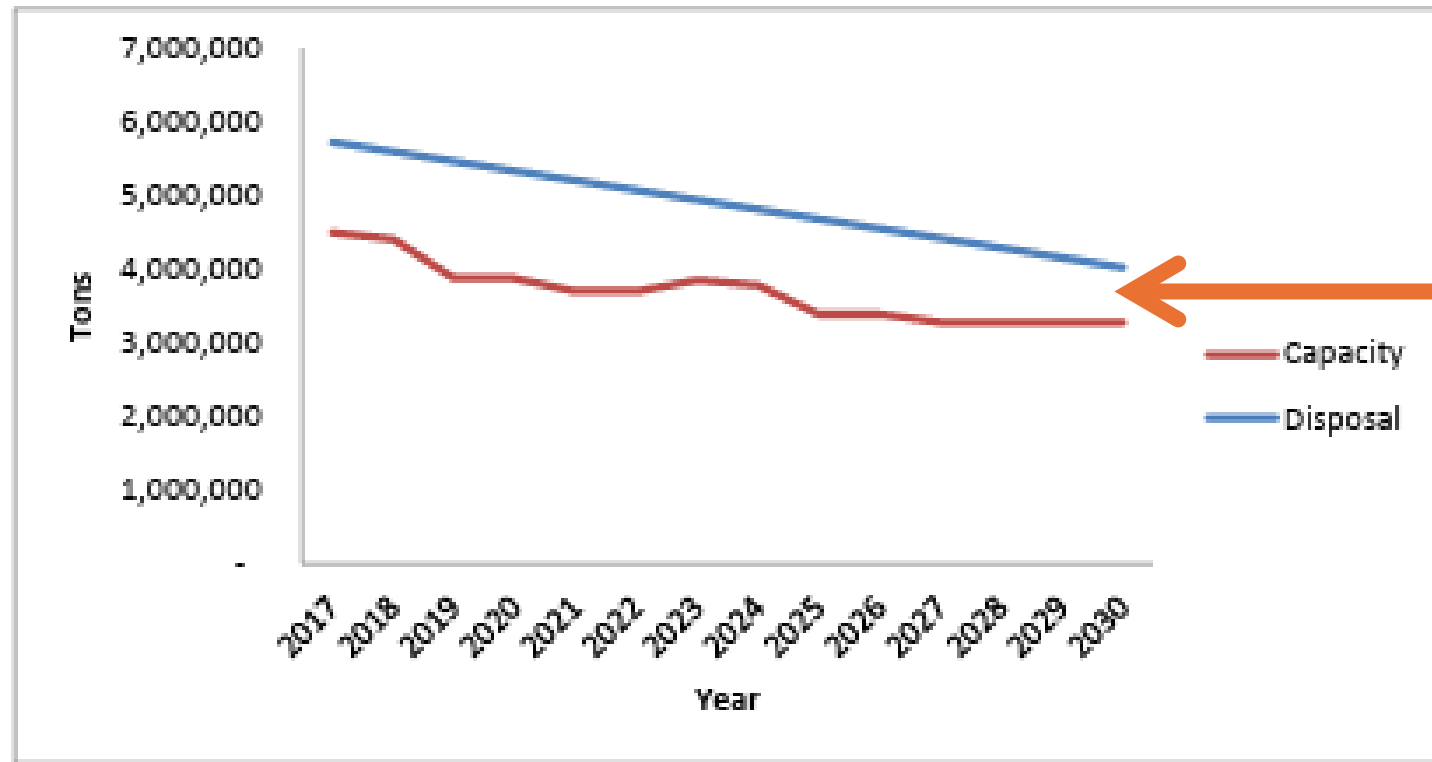


# Issues with relying too heavily on exporting waste

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# Capacity Projections

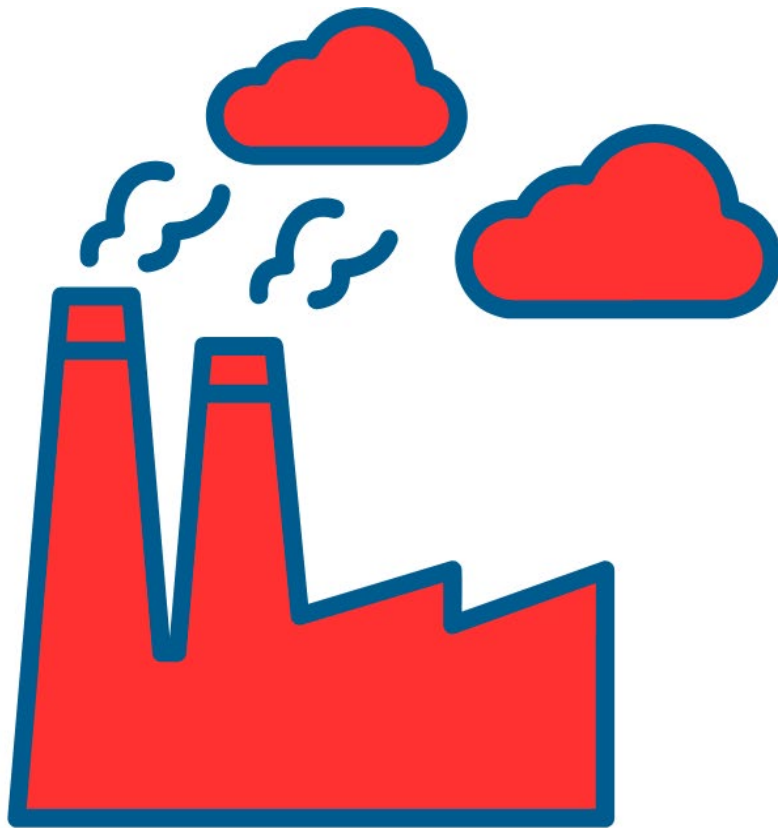


**700,000 Ton  
Gap in 2030**



# Waste Combustion

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**What can be  
done and what  
is MassDEP  
able to do?**

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**What can be  
done and what  
is MassDEP  
**UN**able to do?**

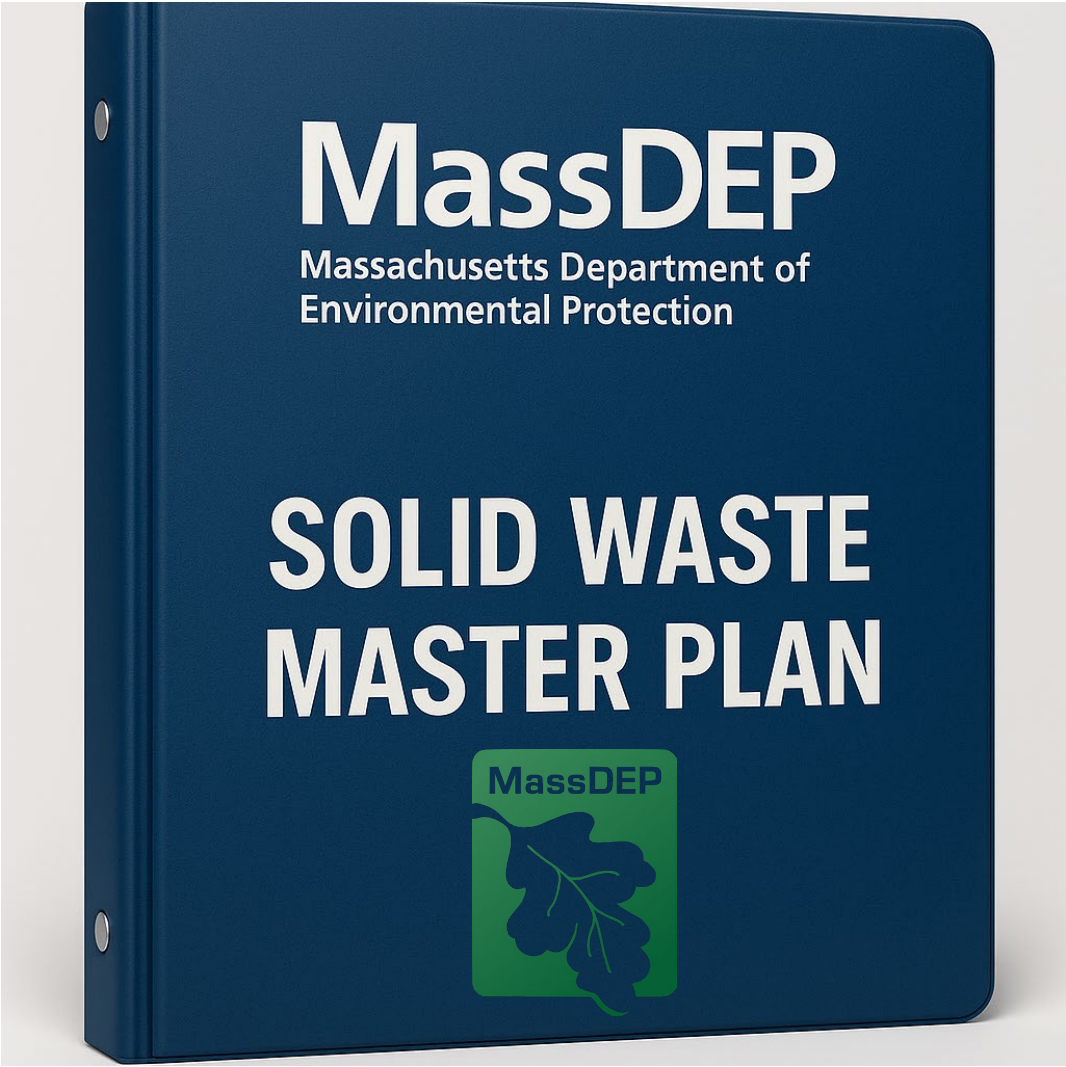
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# Things MassDEP is unable to do

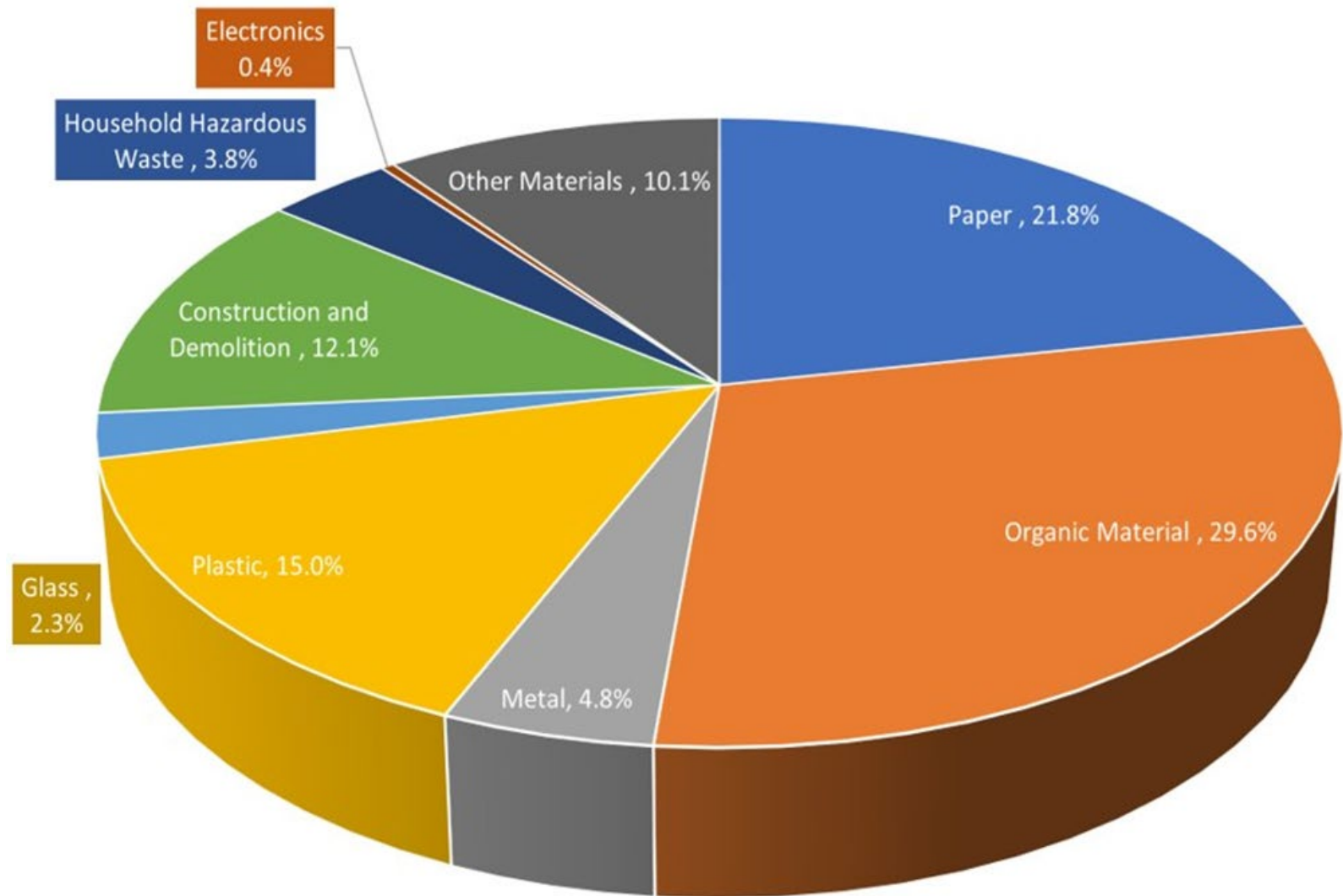
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- Dictate disposal destinations
- Set prices
- Mandate specific collection technology
- Force a municipality to offer (or skip) a program
- Fund day-to-day operations
- Oversee local procurement or contracts
- Impose producer-funded recycling fees





# Waste Characterization





# MassDEP

## IN ACTION



CY2024 Recycling and Solid Waste Survey									
Municipal Contact Information		Municipal Household Information			Trash		Recycling		
Municipality	Municipal Contact Name	Total Number of Households	Households Served by Municipal Trash Program	Households Served by Municipal Recycling Program	Trash Service Type	Trash Cart Size	Recycling Service Type	Recycling Collection Frequency	Recycling Cart Size
Abington	Chris Schultz	5,267	4,610	4,917	Curbside	64/65G	Curbside	Weekly	64/65G
Acton	Corey York	10,385	4,256	4,671	Drop-off		Curbside		
Acushnet	-- DID NOT REPORT --								
Adams	Linda Cernik	3,867	523	523	Drop-off		Drop-off		
Agawam	Tracy DeMaio	12,220	8,937	8,937	Curbside	64/65G	Curbside	Bi-weekly	95/96G
Alford	Thomas Horrigan	324	324	324	Drop-off		Drop-off		
Amesbury	-- DID NOT REPORT --								
Amherst	Steve Telega	9,428	2,508	2,508	Drop-off		Drop-off		
Andover	Joyce Losick-Yang	15,458	10,607	10,607	Curbside		Curbside	Bi-weekly	
Aquinnah	Donald Hatch	403	225	225	Drop-off		Drop-off		
Arlington	Charlotte Milan	20,311	20,311	20,311	Curbside		Curbside	Weekly	
Key		Final							





# BRAVO!



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**THE** CAMBRIDGE  
**WORKS** DEPARTMENT  
OF PUBLIC



# Thank you

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Ron Cochran

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