

DIVE BRIEF

Massachusetts banning disposal of textiles, mattresses and more organics in 2022

Published Nov. 3, 2021

 **Cole Rosengren**
Lead Editor

[in](#) [f](#) [t](#) [e](#) [p](#)



Maddie Meyer via Getty Images

Dive Brief:

- Massachusetts is expanding its list of disposal bans, according to a [new solid waste master plan](#) from the Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP). Starting in November 2022, disposal of certain textiles and mattresses, as well as organics from locations generating more than a half-ton per week, will be prohibited.
- The agency also plans to consider in 2025 whether to ban all organics from disposal by 2030. The state will also consider a "declining cap on carbon dioxide emissions from municipal waste combustors" as part of a [broader goal](#) to cut 300,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent per year from such facilities.
- Similar to its goals in a 2019 draft plan, MassDEP is aiming for a 30% reduction in waste disposal volumes by 2030 and a 90% reduction by 2050 (from a 2018 baseline). The agency delayed the release of this plan to allow for new comments around climate change, environmental justice and pandemic effects, though some critics say the plan doesn't go far enough in these areas.

Dive Insight:

Massachusetts was in a tight spot with disposal capacity when this plan was [initially discussed](#), and the situation hasn't gotten much better since. The number of active landfills is dwindling, combustion facilities are generally operating at capacity and out-of-state waste exporting is increasingly common. Growing urgency around addressing climate change and environmental justice at the state level has added new layers of complexity.

The state saw some progress on its prior 10-year reduction target, but 5.51 million tons were still disposed in 2019. Even if the new 2030 goal is met, MassDEP estimates there will be an in-state disposal capacity gap of 700,000 tons and "virtually zero" landfill space by that year. In this final plan, the state kept the door open to possibly permit another [350,000 tons](#) of "innovative" disposal capacity in the future, while also noting it could renew existing permits for combustion facilities.

Get the free newsletter

Subscribe to Waste Dive for top news, trends & analysis

Sign up

MOST POPULAR

 **PPHC 2021: What's next for HDPE, PET, OCC and mixed paper markets**

 **Wave of investment just the beginning for EV battery recycling**

 **High aluminum prices, supply chain issues create 'best of times and the worst of times' for recyclers**

 **Tracking the industry: US waste and recycling info hub**

LIBRARY RESOURCES

 **PLAYBOOK**
How Fleet Intelligence Enhances Government Fleet Operations

 **PLAYBOOK**
How Waste Processors Are Increasing Their Recovery Rates

 **BLOG POST**
One year covering COVID-19's impact on the waste and recycling sector

[View all](#)

COMPANY ANNOUNCEMENTS

 **EquipmentShare Launches T3, the Operating System for Construction, to Enhance Industry-Wide ...**
From EquipmentShare

 **EquipmentShare's T3 Technology Earns AutoTech Breakthrough Fleet Management Innovation Award**
From EquipmentShare

[View all](#) | [Post a press release](#)

WHAT WE'RE READING

With that in mind, environmental groups such as the Conservation Law Foundation (CLF) and MassPIRG [have said](#) the plan must be more aggressive — both to reduce disposal volumes and to mitigate their effects on host communities. MassDEP said it hasn't heard directly from environmental justice communities on this latest plan, but it looks forward to engaging. Meanwhile, the state says this is as far as it can go.

“We’ve tried to make our goals very aggressive, but in this plan in particular we really tried to look at the materials in the waste stream and assess what we feel realistically could be diverted from disposal in a 10-year period given the state of our infrastructure,” said John Fischer, MassDEP’s branch chief for commercial waste reduction.

In the master plan, [MassDEP identifies](#) (in descending order of quantity) food, cardboard, untreated wood, textiles and bulky materials as the greatest areas of diversion potential. The question of enforcement funding is an ongoing one, with environmental groups regularly noting the state doesn't fully capitalize on its current cardboard disposal ban, but agency leadership sees value in expanding this approach.

The addition of clean [textiles](#) and [mattresses](#) to the state's list of waste bans is seen as newer territory, though some level of local infrastructure already exists to manage each stream. Fischer said the initial focus will be on large generators rather than the residential level — for example, hotels and dormitories throwing out mattresses — but he also views textile diversion as a potential cost saver for municipalities.

The state's 2014 disposal ban for entities generating one ton or more of wasted food per week has led to a significant uptick in available processing infrastructure, but municipal adoption of organics collection has been relatively limited. Groups such as CLF say Massachusetts should follow Vermont's lead and ban the disposal of all organics much sooner than 2030.

“That’s way too far out... We know how good that is for climate,” said Kirstie Pecci, director of CLF's Zero Waste Project, who believes this is a key moment to make changes given rising waste and recycling costs. “We’re even seeing more momentum around EPR and around the bottle bill, because cities and towns are paying so much for their curbside recycling.”

MassDEP's plan does note the agency hopes to engage more directly with state legislators, including the growing Massachusetts Zero Waste Caucus, on pending bills around EPR and bottle bill expansion. When asked if this signaled support from Gov. Charlie Baker's administration, Fischer said MassDEP would not be advocating for policy but wants to be part of the discussions. Broader adoption of municipal pay-as-you-throw programs is also listed as a priority in the plan, but Fischer sees any type of requirement as something the state legislature would need to approve.

One area that may yield further disposal reduction without legislative action is market development. The plan calls for creation of a State Agency Recycling Market Development Council, as well as a new \$1 million grant program focused on waste reduction and recycling innovations. MassDEP's existing efforts have delivered an estimated \$40 million in grants, loans and assistance for broader recycling projects since 2010.

“The disposal bans that have been very successful in Massachusetts, there’s been several years of targeted state market development investment in creating end markets for those materials. They’ve really been exemplary in that regard,” said Lynn Rubenstein, executive director of the Northeast Recycling Council.

NERC has tracked waste ban policies around the U.S., finding Massachusetts to be among the more active states in this area. As for market development, especially around organics, Rubenstein said NERC's recent work on this has found plenty of room for improvement as “there’s very little government use of our compost in our region.”

In the years ahead, MassDEP also plans to ramp up its focus on reuse and reduction initiatives with a new working group, as well as to continue efforts on construction and demolition material management and broader food waste reduction.

 GOTHAMIST

As Trash Piles Up On Staten Island, Residents Blame De Blasio, Not Sanitation Workers Protesting Vaccine Mandate [↗](#)

 LOS ALTOS TOWN CRIER

Los Altos Hills eyes new garbage deal after hauler acquisition [↗](#)

 WAGONER COUNTY AMERICAN-TRIBUNE

Pryor Waste takes over residential, commercial trash services in Wagoner [↗](#)

[View all](#)

As for the industry's role in making all of this happen, the National Waste & Recycling Association's regional vice president, Steve Changaris, was supportive of the plan and called it "aggressive, but prudent."

Changaris said his local members will be busy getting ready for implementation of the 2022 waste bans, with the potential for thousands of new organics collection customers if they aren't already subscribing for service, but he sees these steps as a positive move toward addressing Massachusetts' waste infrastructure challenges.

"Any ton diverted is a ton freed up," he said. "There's a great imbalance in the system."

Recommended Reading:

 WASTE DIVE

[How mattress recyclers adapt to evolving consumer trends](#)

 WASTE DIVE

[As dozens of curbside textile recycling programs pause, others launch anew](#)

Follow Cole Rosengren on [Twitter](#)

[in](#) POST [f](#) SHARE [t](#) TWEET [p](#) PRINT [e](#) EMAIL

Filed Under: **Collections & Transfer, Recycling, Organics, Landfill, Energy, Zero Waste**

COMPANY ANNOUNCEMENTS

[View all](#) | [Post a press release](#)

EquipmentShare Launches T3, the Operating System for Construction, to Enhance Industry-Wide ...

From EquipmentShare
October 21, 2021



EquipmentShare's T3 Technology Earns AutoTech Breakthrough Fleet Management Innovation Award

From EquipmentShare
October 28, 2021



Want to share a company announcement with your peers?

[Get started](#) →

EDITORS' PICKS



LRS acquires numerous Midwest assets from GFL, including Advanced divestitures

The recently closed deal contains substantial collection and hauling business in Illinois, including the Chicago area, as well as assets in Minnesota. The deal is the largest for LRS to date.

By Cole Rosengren • Oct. 01, 2021



DEEP DIVE
With landfill methane in the climate spotlight, satellite and flyover measurements attract a following

Landfill operators, nonprofits and regulators are looking to remote measurement technologies as a new way to check on methane releases. But it's too soon to know if they'll settle the emissions modeling debate.

By Leslie Nemo • Nov. 03, 2021

LATEST IN COLLECTIONS & TRANSFER



2021 earnings coverage: GFL Environmental

By Waste Dive Team



Massachusetts banning disposal of textiles, mattresses and more organics in 2022

By Cole Rosengren



Could better recycling logistics solve EPR challenges?

By Ryan Smith



Tracking the industry: US waste and recycling info hub

By Waste Dive Team

Waste Dive news delivered to your inbox

Get the free daily newsletter read by industry experts

Sign up



EXPLORE

- About
- Editorial Team
- Contact Us
- Newsletter
- Article Reprints
- Press Releases
- What We're Reading

REACH OUR AUDIENCE

- Advertising
- Post a press release

RELATED PUBLICATIONS

- Smart Cities Dive
- Utility Dive

We use cookies to optimize your experience on our website and for analytics and advertising purposes. By continuing to use our site, you agree to our cookie policy. [Learn more](#)

Accept