

# 2013 Revision to NM Solid Waste Management Plan

---

## Revision Process

An update to the state's Solid Waste Management Plan is under way. New Mexico Environment Department Solid Waste Bureau (NMED SWB) staff have begun collecting input from interested parties to guide revision of the plan, which was created in 1993 and last revised in 2007.

SWB conducted an online survey in March 2013 as a first step in the process. The survey was announced through a press release, on the SWB website, and through several mailing lists (Solid Waste Association of North America—NM Chapter, New Mexico Recycling Coalition, NM Association of Counties, and NM Municipal League), as well as by direct email to a group of stakeholders who were involved in creation of the 2007 plan. Although the mailing lists undoubtedly overlap, the Bureau estimates that at least 1000 individuals were invited to take part in the survey.

Response to the survey was low, with 46 people participating. An average of seven people submitted comments on questions with write-in boxes. Many of the questions asked participants to rate a recommendation from the 2007 plan on a 1-5 scale, with 1 being very low priority and 5 as very high priority. Nearly all the recommendations were rated 3 or 4 (medium to high priority).

The Solid Waste Bureau interprets the low level of participation, limited number of comments, and support for the 2007 recommendations as an indication that stakeholders are generally satisfied with the existing plan.

The Solid Waste Bureau is now creating a revised draft to be published in advance of a stakeholder meeting later this year. Attendees will be encouraged to comment on and suggest revisions to the draft, and a final draft will be prepared based on input from the meeting.

The Solid Waste Management Plan helps guide strategies regarding solid waste management in the state.

## Survey Results

The survey questions were structured in six topic areas, as was the 2007 plan. An overview of results from the survey follows.

### Waste Characterization

Most survey respondents indicated that a waste characterization study is not needed (69%). Of this group, about half (48%) said EPA figures could be used instead.

All recommendations from the 2007 plan regarding waste characterization were rated between medium-low to medium-high priority. The top priorities were:

- Provide oversight and training to assist facility operators with corrective measures to resolve data collection problems.
- Require all facilities to install scales.
- Provide technical assistance and include training modules on waste characterization methods in the certification courses.

## **Diversion**

A majority of respondents (74%) said the primary goal of the diversion plan should be to create access to recycling and diversion opportunities rather than to achieve a certain diversion percentage (21%).

A majority of respondents (70%) said a recycling tier structure is still appropriate. Most of the write-in comments (6 of 10) indicated the tiers should be used for evaluating funding applications. Most respondents (68%) said the tiers as described in the 2007 plan should not be modified.

Each of the recommendations from the 2007 plan was rated between medium and high priority. The top priorities were:

- Provide initiatives for voluntary programs that increase a community's access to recycling; take steps to marshal grants, incentives, and other resources; and elicit support from partner organizations, such as the New Mexico Municipal League and the New Mexico Association of Counties.
- Promote, document, and track existing and potential source reduction programs in New Mexico, including reuse programs that intercept discards before they actually enter the solid waste stream.

Among other diversion goals, the highest priorities were:

- Establish a HHW and CESQG Fund to help government units and generators implement management, collection, and recycling programs for hazardous items.
- Prepare and maintain a current list of mercury lamp recyclers, and strongly encourage all businesses to recycle mercury-containing lamps.

Top priorities among the secondary diversion goals from the 2007 plan were:

- Encourage diversion in addition to recycling
- Promote recycling at landfills

## **Facilities**

Most survey respondents (90%) said nothing further is needed for the Facilities chapter of the plan than for the Solid Waste Bureau to update the chapter to reflect current conditions.

Each of the 2007 recommendations was rated between medium and high priority. The top priorities were:

- Work with a coalition of organizations to support a joint effort to identify funding sources for recycling and composting initiatives statewide.
- Work with a coalition of organizations to support a joint effort to identify and pursue funding to offset increased infrastructure and transportation costs for smaller communities closing local landfills and transitioning to transfer stations.

## Education

Developing an integrated, statewide message campaign was rated as the top priority for education. All survey respondents agreed with the 2007 recommendation to partner with the Recycling and Illegal Dumping Alliance, NMRC, SWANA, and others to develop a statewide message campaign.

Each of the recommendations from the 2007 plan was rated between medium and high priority. The top priorities were:

- Identify and train on what can be recycled
- Create a statewide public message campaign
- Update the website to include permit applications and / or make them available electronically

Other top priorities included the following (a larger average ranking number reflects a higher ranking):

Target audiences for recycling, diversion, and illegal dumping education:

- Communities / generators of waste
- Elected officials

Best use of state dollars:

- Develop a common message
- Education on reuse and other ways of reducing the consumption-throwaway pattern

Areas of most need:

- Formulate an integrated plan for education
- Identify priority program areas for education emphasis

## Funding

A majority of survey respondents (81%) said the Solid Waste Bureau should assemble information on past and currently available state funds for solid waste management and diversion.

The top priorities among the recommendations from the 2007 plan were as follows.

Mechanisms to request funding from the Legislature:

- Creating a capital outlay revolving funding source within the control of SWB. The funding criteria should contain both sustainability and accountability components.
- Enacting a surcharge through the legislature on some identified item, such as a per-ton fee on waste sent to landfills or a tax on plastic retail bags, and dedicating the resulting revenues to a solid waste management / diversion fund.

Mechanisms commonly used in other states for funding state and local solid waste programs to consider:

- Landfill tip fee
- Pay as you throw (PAYT) / Unit pricing

Existing economic development incentives in New Mexico to consider:

- Manufacturer's investment tax credit
- Recycled content price preference

## **Environmental Justice**

Each of the recommendations from the 2007 plan was rated between medium and high priority. The top priority was:

- Develop and implement an outreach and technical assistance program to assist local governments and communities with strategies to limit illegal dumping.