

Waste Management and Recycling Financial Data

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Summary:

Local governments in Florida spend hundreds of millions of dollars annually on ineffective recycling programs. These programs recycle little plastic into useable material, but instead burn much of the plastic, polluting the air with dioxin and greenhouse gasses. Burning plastics to generate electricity produces greenhouse gasses equivalent to coal-powered generation in quantity and cleanliness. Initiatives to increase waste-to-energy production harm the health and welfare of Floridians and are thus misguided.

Given the weak demand for recycled plastics and lack of effective plastic recycling facilities, the economy and public health are better served by reducing sale and distribution of single-use plastics rather than wasting money and effort on plastics recycling or waste-to-energy programs. ¹

Federal Assistance:

Federal grant programs exist to aid local governments in reducing plastic waste and plastics pollution in state waters. These grants can cover costs of programs that decrease environmental pollution.

Bipartisan Save Our Seas 2.0 Act of 2020

The Act provides up to \$55 million per year for fiscal years 2021-2025 for grants to states to implement post-consumer materials management programs and research programs designed to reduce pollution by consumer plastics and microplastics in our marine waters. By January of 2023, EPA must provide a report to Congress describing, “*how much plastic waste was prevented from entering the oceans and other waterways due to the grants program.*” ² Additional grant funds are provided by the Trash Free Waters Grant program.

Recycling Recognition Program:

“The Recycling Recognition Program was created by DEP to encourage private businesses, institutions, schools, public organizations and citizens to increase recycling. DEP monitors and recognizes outstanding recycling efforts around the state. Since its inception in 2012, the Recycling Recognition Program has presented over 45 awards to a variety of large and small businesses, public organizations and individuals.” ⁴

Recommendation:

Reduce plastics pollution and improve public health in local waste management operations by introducing legislation to reduce generation of plastic waste and educating citizens and local businesses on alternatives to single-use plastics.

How Miami-Dade County spent on waste management in 2020:

Resource recovery & incineration for energy \$45.7 million

Covanta Dade Renewable Energy, manages the Resources Recovery Facility in Miami-Dade County and processes recyclable trash and non-recyclable waste.

Miami-Dade County has opted not to renew the contract because of air pollution from burning plastic.

Waste collection & processing \$13.7 million

Waste Management Inc. of Florida delivers waste to Waste Management Landfill of Medley, Florida. Processes County waste and delivers 100,000 tons to County facilities.³

Progressive Waste Solutions of Florida Inc. & DBA Waste Connections

Delivers 51% of county waste with a fee of \$21.34 per ton.

“The annual fee for curbside collection increased from \$464 in fiscal year 2019 to \$484 per household in fiscal year 2020. The increase was made effective via a non-ad valorem assessment of \$20 approved by the Board of County Commissioners with the purpose of maintaining the current level of services.”

Curbside collection and hauling of recyclable items \$9.4 million

Progressive Waste Solutions of Florida Inc. & DBA Waste Connections & World Waste Recycling Inc.

Litter Control \$1.2 million

Remediation of County Landfill Pollution \$77.2 million

Recycling \$9.6 million

Total costs \$254.2 million

What the Florida DEP⁴ is saying about recycled plastics:

“According to Waste Management, Inc., two years ago, the average price for mixed recovered materials that were commonly collected was \$140.00/ton. The average price of mixed recyclables for Quarter 1 of 2019 was \$56.90/ton; resulting in a 70% decrease in the value of mixed recovered materials.”

Unfortunately, this statement means that recycled plastic has nowhere to go and costs local governments more money to process. The response has been to burn more “recycled” plastic waste.⁴

“The tipping fees for disposal at landfills are much lower than the cost to recycle and many municipalities are left with the decision of whether to continue curbside recycling at a much higher cost or dispose of this material at a lower cost. Consequently, many programs have decided to drop material types, i.e., glass, from their recycling programs or drop their curbside programs altogether.”

This statement reflects the reality that Florida’s local governments are unable to manage the plastic accumulating in their sectors. Local restrictions on single-use plastics could limit the costs of plastics disposal by local governments, but these solutions are currently preempted by the State.⁴

What the Florida DEP⁴ proposes:

- “Tax incentives for usage of recycled materials as feed stocks in manufacturing processes.
- Tax incentives and credits to support materials recovery plant upgrades.
- Public/Private partnerships to invest in new processing technologies.
- Investments in expansion of Recycling Business Assistance Center activities.
- End-user purchase rebate for Florida Certified Compost.”

These recommendations seem beneficial overall, but we see no reason to believe they could significantly increase effective recycling of single-use plastics.

Works Cited

¹ Ali, S., Ahmed, W., Solangi, Y. et al. Strategic analysis of single-use plastic ban policy for environmental sustainability: the case of Pakistan. Clean Techn Environ Policy (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10098-020-02011w>

² *Bipartisan save our seas 2.0 act signed into law*. The National Law Review. (n.d.). <https://www.natlawreview.com/article/bipartisan-save-our-seas-20-act-signed-law>.

³ Miami-Dade County, Comprehensive Annual Financial Report For the Fiscal Year Ended September 30, 2020 Waste Management Enterprise Fund <https://www.miamidade.gov/solidwaste/library/reports/comprehensive-annual-financial-report-2020.pdf>

⁴ Florida and the 2020 75% Recycling Goal: 2019 Status Report, Volume 1
https://floridadep.gov/sites/default/files/Final%20Strategic_Plan_2019%2012-13-2019_1.pdf