

2005 Solid Waste Disposal Capacity Report

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*Report to the
Joint Standing Committee on
Natural Resources
123rd Maine Legislature
in accordance with
38 MRS A §2124-A*

STATE PLANNING OFFICE

Waste Management & Recycling
38 State House Station
Augusta ME 04333
Phone: 207-287-6077
www.maine.gov/spo

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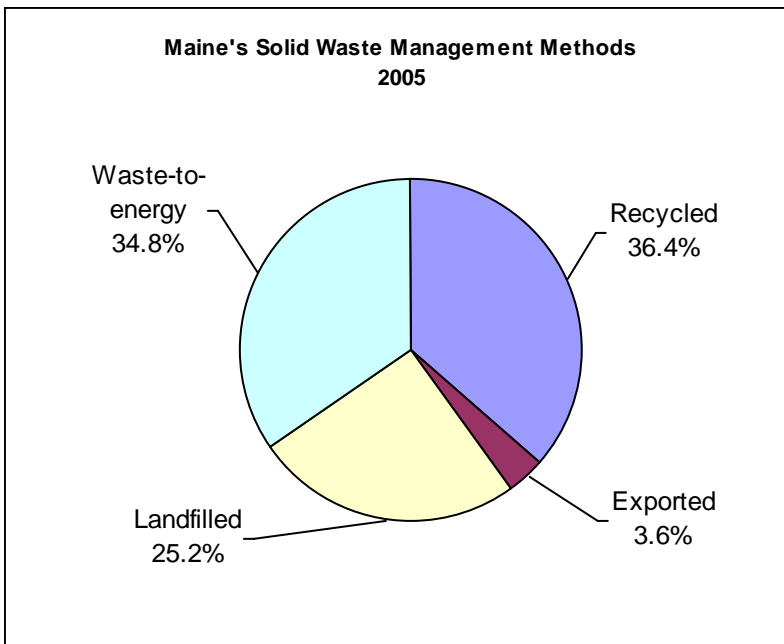


The state's current solid waste management system, a blend of public and private efforts, functions efficiently to meet Mainers' needs. The state has sufficient disposal capacity for at least the next 20 years and recycling efforts have significantly extended the lifespan of that capacity.

This report provides an overview of Maine's municipal solid waste recycling, combustion, and landfill activities for 2005¹ in order to: 1) determine the impact that these activities have on available solid waste disposal capacity, 2) identify planned and consumed capacity, and 3) project the lifespan of capacity. The report also assesses progress towards achieving the state's 50% recycling goal.

KEY FINDING: Maine landfills only a fraction of its waste.

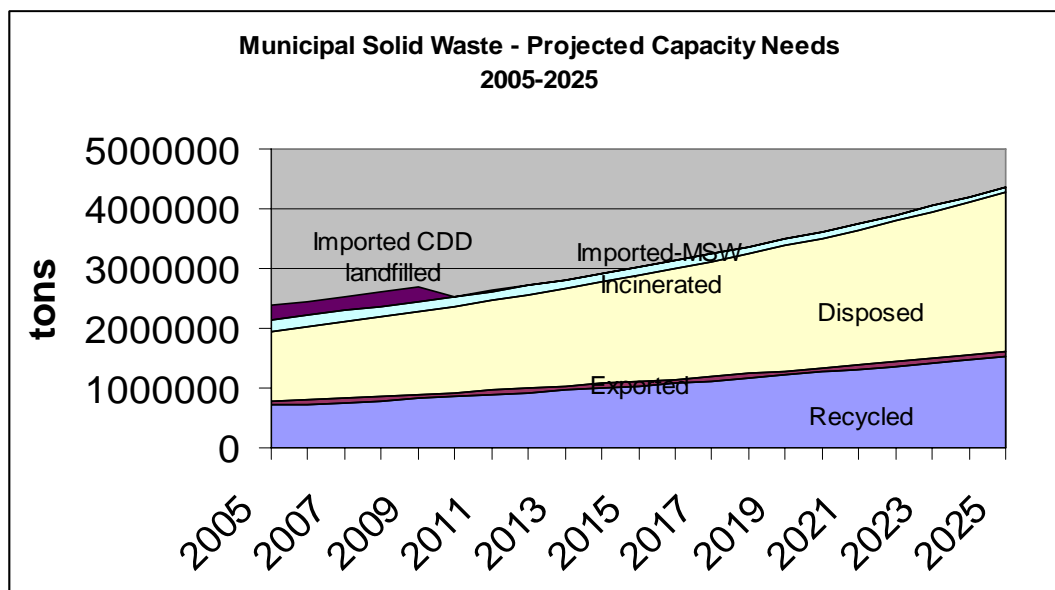
Only one-quarter (25.2%) of the state's municipal solid waste is landfilled within Maine. Just over a third (34.8%) is delivered to four waste-to-energy plants and 36.4% is recycled, which reduce the volume of waste needing to be landfilled.



KEY FINDING: Maine has sufficient disposal capacity for more than 20 years at projected fill rates.

Disposal capacity is a factor of need versus availability.² To calculate disposal capacity need, we set the following parameters: 1) recycling continues to reduce the waste needing to be landfilled by one-third every year, and 2) the four waste-to-energy facilities continue to handle their maximum licensed tonnage. Based on these projections, Maine will need 32 million cubic yards of landfill capacity over 20 years.

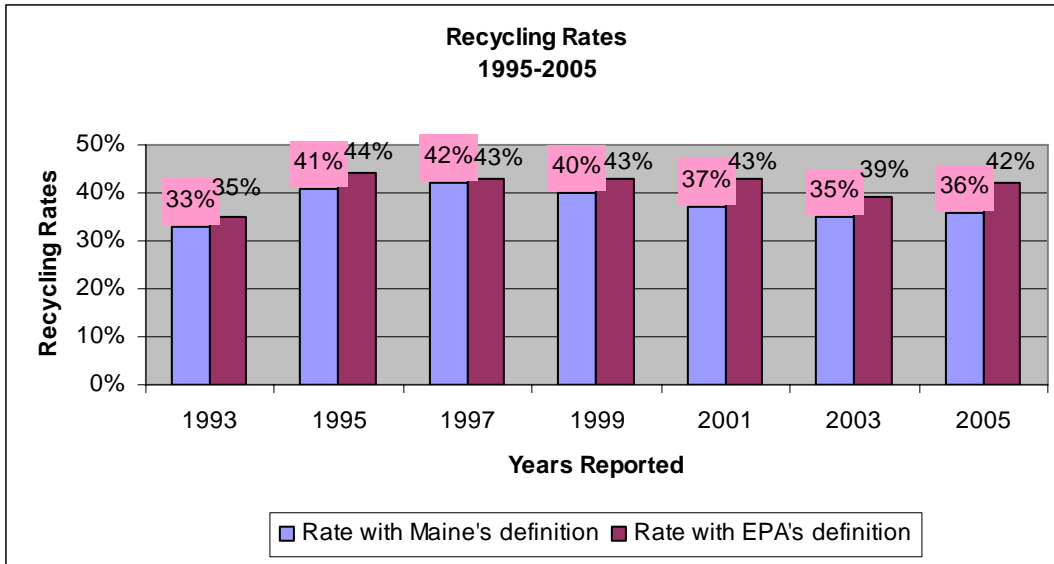
Over this same time, we project that the state's nine municipal, two commercial, and one state-owned landfills will provide 42 million cubic yards of landfill capacity. While Maine has sufficient capacity, we must not be complacent. Siting new disposal facilities is a costly and volatile undertaking. Maine should do all that it can to extend the life of this capacity.



Maine's current statewide recycling rate is 36%. Recycling has held steady for a decade.

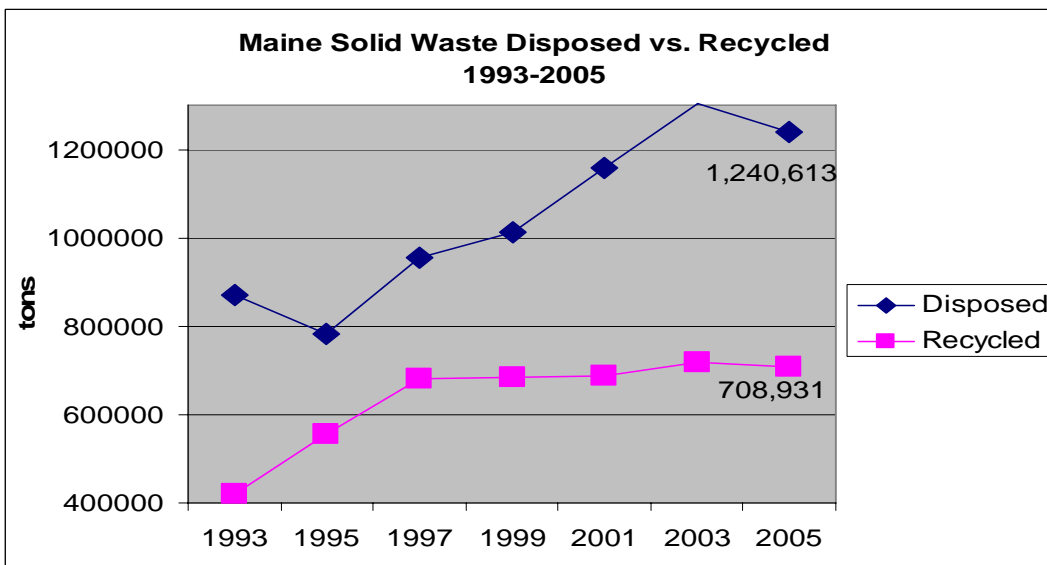
Maine's statutory definition for municipal solid waste (MSW) includes bulky waste and construction and demolition debris. However, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's does not count these materials as part of MSW nationally. We can also compute the state recycling rate exclusive of these materials. Either way, Maine's recycling rate is strong.

KEY FINDING:
Maine's recycling rate is steady and strong.



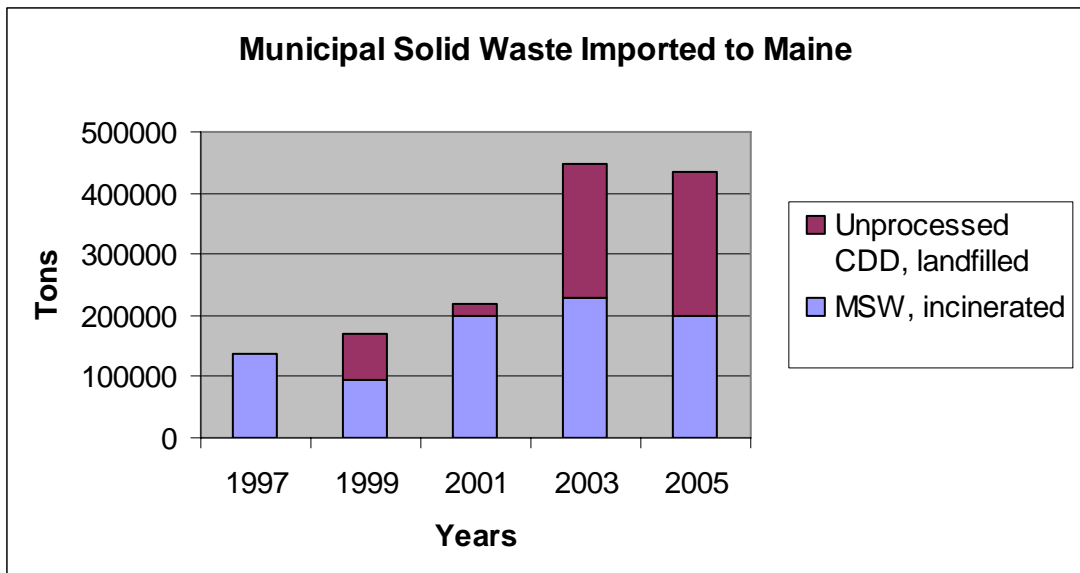
Maine has a 12-year trend of increased recycling (in tons). Over the same time, municipal solid waste generated has exceeded recycling growth; preventing the state recycling rate from increasing.

KEY FINDING:
Mainers continue to recycle more each year, but recycling has not kept pace with the growth in the amount of waste we generate.



KEY FINDING: Imports of out-of-state waste support Maine’s solid waste management system.

While disposal facilities in Maine added 18% (436,412 tons)³ to the waste stream from out-of-state in 2005, almost half⁴ was brought in by three of the waste-to-energy facilities to keep plants running at design capacity. The imported waste allows the plants to meet their obligation for electrical production that, in turn, keeps them operating economically and maintains tipping fees. One of the plants required 48% of its fuel needs to be met by importing waste.



KEY FINDING: Maine’s solid waste disposal fees are stable.

The opening of the state-owned Juniper Ridge Landfill will moderate disposal prices in Maine. When the state contracted for the operations of the landfill, it set an upper limit on fees for wastes delivered to the facility. Over time, it is expected that this tip fee ceiling will have a dampening effect on fees for similar wastes delivered to other solid waste facilities.

NOTES AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

¹Calculations are based on data provided by municipalities, commercial recycling brokers, and public and private disposal facilities. Data from calendar year 2005 are the most current, complete data available for this report.

² See the full report for the projection assumptions and details

³This number does not include green wood or processed CDD chips imported by industrial boilers within the state for use as biomass fuel. See full report for a further discussion.

⁴ The other half of the 2005 imported waste comprised unprocessed construction and demolition debris, which was landfilled at the state’s two commercial landfills.

The full text of the state 2006 *Solid Waste Disposal Capacity Report* is available on-line at www.maine.gov/spo/recycle.

This report provides an analysis of disposal capacity as required by state law. The state *Waste Management & Recycling Plan* will be issued in 2007. The plan will take a broader view of waste management activities in Maine including analyzing how we manage waste and recommending ways to improve solid waste management in Maine.

Thanks to State Planning Office staff for the preparation of this report: Jody Harris, Sue Inches, George McDonald, and Sam Morris.