



2025 Summary of Activities:

WRRMA continued to move forward with the goal of increasing the quantity of high-quality recycling for WRRMA communities. The effort to jointly contract services for hauling of trash, recycling, and yard waste for four WRRMA communities was unsuccessful. WRRMA Board members discussed where to focus their next effort and decided to continue to pursue a regular cycle of recycling education. The late 2024 recycling audit indicated that additional education should be pursued in 2025.

WRRMA has pursued joint hauling services for the last few years for any interested WRRMA community. A joint contract for services is anticipated to yield the following benefits:

- A unified approach to managing materials. A regional approach with neighboring communities allows for increased efficiencies when routing trucks which in turn decreases emissions and costs. Sending recycling to the same location as other WRRMA members enables common messaging and outreach. People travel between municipalities constantly; having differing recycling rules at work or a friend's house creates confusion.
- Increased negotiating power which could be leveraged to improve service, decrease costs, or both.
- Full time staffing provided by WRRMA. This would allow for increased education and municipal support when resolving issues with the hauler(s).
- Contract terms that incentivize accountability and waste diversion.

Reasons for not releasing a joint request for proposal in early 2025 as planned, include turnover in WRRMA delegates and elected officials at a crucial time, a gap in communication between WRRMA efforts and elected officials, and concerns about jointly selecting a hauler in light of widely reported service issues in southeast Michigan after Priority Waste acquired GFL routes. Delegates expressed an interest in mitigating these issues with improved communication and involvement of local decision makers over the next four years, so that when the next opportunity to collaborate on a joint contract emerges WRRMA will be better prepared to capitalize on the opportunity. To this end, WRRMA will be discussing changes in the authority's structure that may require a change of the Articles of Incorporation in 2026.

After the unsuccessful contracting effort, delegates expressed a desire to refocus on education and outreach. Staff started by providing each municipality with a series of recommendations to improve their municipal websites on trash and recycling. Staff also provided a digital recycling education social media kit for each community to use in their municipal outreach. The July meeting focused on electronics recycling which was followed up by an optional tour of an electronics processing facility. Delegates were also able to attend tours of the Ann Arbor Compost yard, Materials Recovery Facility, and Arbor Hills Landfill in August. WRRMA continued to provide a recycling search engine for residents to help them understand what is recyclable in their community. The "Waste Wizard" is incorporated into the front page of the WRRMA website. Several member municipalities incorporate the website into their waste and recycling page as a resource for residents. From 10/1/24-9/30/2025, the Waste Wizard had 1,955 sessions in which residents conducted 2,917 materials searches.

Last November, WRRMA conducted an audit of recycling materials to determine the amount of trash in residential recycling. The audit collected samples and indicates levels of contamination and what type of contamination exists. It not a comprehensive audit and should not be considered fully representative. Results indicate that contamination as a whole is similar to what it was in 2021 before WRRMA received grant funding and conducted the “Feet on the Street” campaign. Those results demonstrate that education requires frequent and consistent messaging. While most* communities’ contamination rates were between 14-19% contamination rate, Ypsilanti Township and Pittsfield Township results were between 27-29% contamination showing a large opportunity for improvement. Bagged trash and recycling, which are both sent to the landfill, and unrecyclable paper represented the largest sources of contamination. Unrecyclable paper includes waxed paper, paper towels, wet or food soiled paper, shredded paper, and hardcover books. WRRMA will gather input from delegates about preferred methods of reaching residents and provide technical assistance, recommendations, and coordinate outreach to reduce contamination using the data from the audit.

*The City of Ann Arbor conducts their own comprehensive audits. The City of Ann Arbor was not part of the sample audit noted above. As a member of WRRMA, they can participate in the creation and deployment of educational materials.