

# Minnesota Pollution Control Agency



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## Agency Background

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) is a state environmental agency that monitors environmental quality, offers technical and financial assistance, and enforces environmental regulations. The MPCA works with citizens, communities, businesses, all levels of government, environmental groups, and educators to prevent pollution, conserve resources, and help ensure pollution does not have a disproportionate impact on any group of people. The MPCA's St. Paul office is located at 520 Lafayette Road in an area known as Lafayette Park.



*“As a MnTAP intern, I developed project management and communications skills as well as gained a deeper understanding of waste management. It was an invaluable experience for me.”*

## Project Background

Pursuant to Minnesota State Statute, every state agency must achieve a 60% recycling rate (where 60% of all waste generated is recycled). The same statute mandates that each state agency must report recycling data annually to the MPCA. In 2012, 71% of agencies in the metropolitan area filed no recycling report, and only 14% of these agencies met the 60% recycling goal. The MPCA recognized the opportunity to improve waste reduction and recycling programs and increase the reporting of data, so they enlisted a MnTAP intern to help achieve these goals at the MPCA and other agencies.

The summer intern project had two major focuses. The first was to provide site-specific recommendations for the four state agencies located in the Lafayette Park area of St. Paul - Department of Human Services (DHS), Department of Labor and Industry (DLI), Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and MPCA, to help them achieve the 60% recycling goal. The second focus was to develop a toolkit containing waste reduction and waste recycling best practices suited to state agencies. The toolkit provides guidance for agencies to increase waste reduction and recycling and to more effectively track and report waste data.

## Incentives To Change

In addition to the 60% recycling rate goal set by the state statute, a Governor's Executive Order issued in 2011 also provides incentive for state agencies to reduce waste and recycle more. By reducing waste, agencies can also create a safer and more comfortable working environment, save money, and help establish a positive public image of state agencies as leaders in sustainability.





### Establish Centralized Purchasing And Sharing Of Office Supplies

Each division of DHS and DNR orders its own office supplies. A reuse program would help these agencies effectively meet the demand for office supplies via centralized purchasing, reusing, and circulating extras. It is estimated that DHS and DNR could reduce annual expenses by \$23,700 and \$15,750 respectively by purchasing fewer supplies as a result of this type of program.

### Offer Reusables In The Cafeteria

The MPCA-DNR cafeteria currently provides compostable serviceware, but switching to reusable serviceware would be even more impactful by moving the agencies from recycling to reuse. In addition, replacing disposable takeout containers with returnable ones would further reduce waste. Taking into account the initial investment in a dishwasher, the project could result in a cost savings of \$17,410 annually.

## Solutions

### Start Or Improve Organics Recycling Programs

About 35-55% of the trash discarded at each agency was observed to be organics that could be collected for commercial composting. Improving a current organics recycling program or starting a new one will help agencies capture organics from the trash and increase in their recycling rates of up to 14% (DHS), 17% (DLI), and 12% (DNR).

### Improve Recycling Program

Currently, many recyclables (around 15-30%) are ending up in the trash at each agency. Improving current recycling programs by setting up centralized waste stations, purchasing color-coded bins, updating signage, and improving education and communications with staff would help agencies divert waste to recycling and achieve higher recycling rates. Implementation of improved recycling programs would result in an approximately 7%, 8%, 7%, and 12% increase in recycling rates for DHS, DLI, DNR, and MPCA, respectively.



Recommendation	Reduction	Annual Savings	Status
Start or improve organics recycling programs	106,440 lbs	\$2,570	Recommended
Improve recycling program	76,180 lbs	\$5,400	Recommended
Establish centralized purchasing and sharing of office supplies	1,480 lbs	\$39,450	Recommended
Offer reusables in the cafeteria	7,700 lbs	\$17,410	Recommended