



A non-profit association that provides statewide proactive leadership on waste reduction and recycling through education, advocacy, collaboration, programs and services.

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State Recycling Organization Opposes Cuts To Recycling & Waste Reduction Programs

The board of directors of Associated Recyclers of Wisconsin (AROW) strongly opposes Governor Walker's proposed cuts to state and local recycling and waste reduction initiatives. Across the state, these initiatives have served as the foundation for Wisconsin's robust recycling program. Ninety-three percent of Wisconsinites either strongly support or support recycling.

Specifically, the governor proposes to again cut the Recycling Grant to Responsible Unit, this year by \$4 million or an estimated 22% reduction. This money is used by municipalities across the state to provide their residents with recycling collection services, along with recycling enforcement, recycling education and yard waste services. All of these services are State mandated. These cuts will impose a great hardship on local units of government, who are expected to implement and enforce the state's recycling law. Additionally, the cuts threaten the supply chain of recyclables that many Wisconsin businesses, such as paper mills and foundries, use to produce new products.

The source of funding for the Recycling Grant comes via the \$7 per ton Recycling Fee charged at Wisconsin landfills. The fee was established in the early 1990s as a cost-sharing mechanism between the state and local government. Annually, the Recycling Fee nets an average of \$34.1 million.

The amount of funding to local government has slowly eroded from its 2008 allocation of nearly \$30 million, to \$19 million in 2011. This 40% reduction covered only 18% of net recycling costs borne by local government. This funding loss also correlates with the lowest annual tonnage of materials recovered in the eight years prior to 2011. If the governor's 2015 budget is approved as presented, the Recycling Grant funding would be further reduced to a mere \$15 million and cover only 14% of actual program costs.

In addition to providing financial assistance to local government, the Recycling Fee also funds programs such as the very popular Clean Sweep, the UW Extension Solid & Hazardous Waste Education Center (SHWEC) and the UW Solid Waste Research Program grants, along with DNR recycling staff. While the Clean Sweep program is currently not in jeopardy this year, the \$543,000 in grant funding for SHWEC and UW Solid Waste Research has been wiped from the budget. These programs have provided invaluable information, research, and assistance to the solid waste industry, local communities, and businesses since 1990.

While the funding is a direct loss to these two programs, it is a substantial loss for Wisconsin's solid waste industry. SHWEC provides a wide range of support for those working to more effectively manage post-consumer and post-industrial wastes. SHWEC faculty provides assistance to communities working on recycling education and waste reduction, helping these communities save money. Currently, SHWEC is playing a critical role in working to develop markets for agricultural plastic and helping poultry farmers manage manure through composting.

The UW Solid Waste Research Program provides grants to undergraduate and graduate students, along with faculty, for applied research related to recycling, waste reduction and alternative uses of waste. The body of work from this program is vast, from serving as the foundation for changes to state solid waste laws to aiding private industry in more effective management of waste byproducts. In 2013 student researchers evaluated the effectiveness of a cellphone app that focused on food waste reduction, how to optimize biogas production and assessed the feasibility of an eastern Wisconsin tri-county resource recovery facility.

The Recycling Fee was specifically created to support recycling and waste reduction endeavors. The AROW board of directors believes that the entire \$7 per ton collected from Wisconsin landfills should be used to restore Recycling Grants to 2008 levels and continue to fund essential recycling and waste reduction programs, such as Clean Sweep, SHWEC and the UW Solid Waste Research Program grants.

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