

Did you know...

WA's overall recovery rate is **49%**, significantly higher than the national average of 32%. We recycle at least 40% of our packaging.

WA's solid waste and recycling industry was **4.1x carbon net zero in 2018** after accounting for landfill and collection emissions and the reduction of greenhouse gases from more materials successfully recycled or composted.

WA is already working to divert 75% of organics waste from landfills by 2030 (HB 1799), resulting in **552,000 fewer tons of greenhouse gas emissions**.

87% of WA residents have access to curbside service and those who don't may access 108 dropbox locations in their communities.

The average household's monthly bill for curbside recycling service is \$8-10, supporting an average of 8 monthly bin pickups of bins for trash (4), recycling (2) and organics (2) with service unique to local needs.

The solid waste and recycling industry **employs about 14,700 workers** to drive trucks, sort materials at Material Recovery Facilities, oversee landfills and much more.

Diverting Organics Waste - Progress

Composting is what we do here in the Pacific Northwest. Whether it's a green bin in the kitchen for food scraps, a bigger bin in the backyard for the garden or expanding investments in solid waste management to divert organic material from our landfills, we all do our part. There is **great opportunity ahead to divert even more organics waste** from landfills and as the **implementation work progresses for three Organic Management Laws (OML) adopted in the past four years** (2022, 2024, 2025), Washington must **ward off attempts to lower regulatory standards for protecting health and safety** as we all seek to responsibly divert more organics waste. It is currently anticipated that more than \$1 billion of private investment must occur to achieve our state's goals.

Setting New (Higher) Standards

The Legislature has adopted three separate Organic Management Laws with sweeping, ambitious changes to our state's organics waste management in just the past four years:

- **OML 1.0 HB - 1799 (2022):** Established goal to divert 75% of organics waste from landfills by 2030. This law mandates commercial organics collection, expands residential organics collection, created a Center for Sustainable Food management and opened state grant funding for farms to spread more compost.
- **OML 2.0 - HB 2301 (2024):** In further addressing food waste and recovery, this law tightened commercial collection requirements, mandates non-voluntary service to all single-family residences by 2030 and revised compostable product labeling standards.
- **OML 3.0 - HB 1497 (2025):** With implementation of HB 1799 and HB 2301 on-going, this law standardizes bin color and labeling, phases in organics collection at multifamily properties, and new building code and access/signage. The law also details an education/outreach program by Ecology on source separation.

Rulemaking for these three new laws is **currently revising or creating more than 12 WACs**, implicating everything from the definitions of organics waste, to contamination limits, and stringent new requirements for composting facilities. Ecology intends to file a CR 102 in May 2026, with public hearings July 2026 and anticipated adoption of new rules in September 2026.

Active, Complex Implementation

Together, Washington's OMLs set milestones in pursuit of 2030 goals. That work is already underway and affecting hundreds of thousands of businesses, millions of residents across Washington State and more than a billion dollars of new investments.

2025: Businesses generating at least 4 cubic yards of organics waste per week must arrange for organic materials management, new expanded map of required geographic areas where businesses are required to compost, any new containers purchased must meet new standards and initial informal comment period complete for rulemaking.

2026: More businesses must arrange for organic materials management, Ecology updates required geographic areas for commercial organics, jurisdictions must include plans to phase in multi-family collection.

2027-2030: Year-round organics collection with food waste mandated for all single-family and business customers that generate more than ¼ cubic yards of waste per week. Container color scheme and label regulation begins, multi-family organics collection requirements phase-in on local timelines.

Depackaging: A Cautionary Tale

Depackaging facilities market their operations as an opportunity for customers to mix their waste streams. For example, instead of separating food waste from its containers, an egg carton with expired eggs can all be tossed in the same bin. The depackager takes this mixed material and uses a combination of machinery that smashes and squeezes the material with an organic slurry as an output. This slurry is then processed by an anaerobic digester to extract biogas and produce compost. The result: packaging materials that would have otherwise been recycled are now going for disposal, contrary to Washington's waste management hierarchy which prioritizes source separation and maximizing recovery of recyclables.

Learning from Other States: In Washington State, depackaging facilities are not yet subject to the same regulatory requirements that protect public health and safety, nor those that pursue the solid waste system's goal of environmental stewardship to effectively divert materials from the landfill. Ecology's proposed rules allow these facilities to accept any materials without any limit on how much they landfill. In other states, such as Vermont, legislatures have adopted a moratorium on any depackaging facilities while new regulations are contemplated in service of public health and safety. The current practice of throwing food mixed with other wastes all in one bin undermines decades of public education. Materials that would have been recycled end up being landfilled. WRRRA supports the Vermont Policy to ensure the continued success of our composting system.



"...A bill passed in 2022 placed a moratorium on expanding depackaging facilities in the state until standards are adopted to limit microplastics and other pollutants which can fall through the screens along with food waste."

[August 5, 2024](#)

Needed Investments, Implementation, Enforcement

If we all are to be successful in diverting 75% of organics waste from landfills by 2030, we need to back up the OMLs with significant investments and responsible regulations that are in place to protect public health and safety. Ecology is currently proposing rules that make it more difficult to compost while undermining decades of investment and education in our source separated organics programs.

Principles of Effective Environmental Stewardship Regulations

Source Separation of Materials: Contaminated recycling and organics waste streams significantly undermine our state's efforts to divert materials from landfills. Ecology's proposed rules would loosen regulations to allow for more waste in organics streams which not only runs counter to decades of investment, but also upends generations of public education that empower residents to be a strong partner in reducing waste. Weakening source separation requirements will also reduce local tax revenue and weaken quality standards that allow organics waste to serve as a safe resource for agriculture. Growing concerns about microplastics in the food supply would also be exacerbated if trash or recyclable materials are commingled with organics waste.

Minimum In-Bound Contamination Limits: Permitted compost facilities have strict in-bound contamination requirements, supporting a performance-based approach that empowers composters to maintain environmental and product quality goals. All operators, including depackaging facilities, must meet the same standard. An uneven playing field in the regulatory framework will significantly put at risk our state's current environmental outcomes.

Consistent Regulatory Framework Across Industries: At the same time Ecology making regulations harder for Composters, Ecology's rules put almost no limits on depackagers. The significant expansion of unregulated operators hauling and processing waste is already leading to enforcement actions to protect environmental and safety standards. As depackaging facilities continue to offer new approaches for processing organics waste, the same regulatory and environmental standards should apply to their operations as to the existing businesses currently regulated by the state.

About Us

The Washington Refuse & Recycling Association (WRRRA) represents solid waste companies and professionals in Washington State. Our mission is to promote environmentally and economically sustainable solid waste and recycling services within our state's regulatory system. The WRRRA is a partnership with the public in pursuit of environmental stewardship through recycling and reducing waste. \

Want to Learn More? Please contact Brad Lovaas, WRRRA executive director, at brad@wrra.org or (360) 280-7723.