



Minnesota Pollution Control Agency Landfill Permitting and Oversight

Topic Selection Background Information

March 2022

Program Overview	The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) is responsible for permitting open landfills that accept different types of waste, such as municipal waste and construction waste. It also reviews monitoring reports and conducts inspections of landfill sites.
Original Evaluation Questions	Does the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency have adequate standards for permitting and expanding landfills? Does MPCA adequately monitor permitted landfills? Besides MPCA, what other public entities are involved in landfill oversight?
Revised Questions	
State Resources <i>Low</i>	MPCA estimated that annual expenditures for permitting and oversight activities for all solid waste facilities—which includes landfills—were approximately \$3 million.
State Control <i>Medium</i>	Statutes and administrative rules give MPCA permitting and oversight authority over open landfills. However, landfills must also comply with federal regulations.
Impact <i>High</i>	Landfills arguably affect all Minnesotans: they accept waste produced by Minnesotans as well as waste produced during the construction of buildings and the production of goods that benefit Minnesotans. Landfills can also have significant long-term impacts on the environment and the health of Minnesotans who live near them.
Timeliness <i>Medium-High</i>	Within the last year, some Minnesota communities have identified a need to expand existing landfills before they fill up. In response, residents living near some of those landfills have expressed environmental justice and water quality concerns related to the proposed expansions. Given these recent concerns, an OLA evaluation could be timely.
Feasibility <i>Medium</i>	OLA could conduct the evaluation using standard practices, such as file reviews and data analysis. However, OLA may not have the technical expertise to evaluate certain aspects of this program, such as construction certification inspections performed by engineers.
Balance <i>Medium</i>	OLA evaluated MPCA’s solid waste facility permitting—which includes landfill permitting—as part of broader evaluations in 1991 and 2011. OLA evaluated MPCA’s recycling and waste reduction activities in 2015 and most recently evaluated an MPCA program in 2022 (<i>Petroleum Remediation Program</i>). This year’s list of potential evaluation topics includes two other topics that could involve MPCA: (1) Grants to Nonprofit Organizations and (2) Programs Supporting Minnesotans Who Are Black, Indigenous, or People of Color.
Discussion <i>High impact and timely</i>	Landfills arguably affect all Minnesotans to some degree and Minnesotans who live near them to a significant degree. Given recent concerns related to the proposed expansion of some landfills, it could be a good time for OLA to evaluate this topic.