

August 31, 2016

Subject: **2025 Solid Waste and Materials Management Plan Update**

Dear Citizens of Tennessee,

Over the past year, the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC, the Department) has focused efforts toward effectively implementing the 2025 Solid Waste and Materials Management Plan (2025 Plan), and specifically toward updating the state solid waste diversion goal. At this time, based on research and analysis completed and feedback received from stakeholders, TDEC is recommending postponing a goal update until a later date and instead, in the near term, focusing our efforts on the consistent and accurate reporting of solid waste and diversion data.

Initial work to update the 25% diversion goal included the efforts of a multidisciplinary team of TDEC staff that analyzed statewide municipal solid waste (MSW) disposal, recycling, and diversion data; researched and evaluated other state goals; and hosted a series of stakeholder input meetings to share potential future goal recommendations.

The majority of stakeholder input regarding future goal revisions fell into several categories including: funding and costs, terminology, data and measurement, and fail-safes. Given concerns expressed regarding data accuracy, TDEC conducted further analysis of the historic waste generation, recycling, and diversion data at the regional and county levels. Based on this additional analysis and the inconsistent fluctuations within this data from one year to the next, the Department has concluded that we are not in a position to make a sound decision for updating the state numeric waste diversion goal.

Postponing the goal update for 2-3 years will allow the Department to focus on improving the quality and consistency of data reported. Making such improvements will allow TDEC and external stakeholders to better understand current disposal, recycling, and diversion conditions. As part of this process, the Department is committed to reviewing reporting requirements and the Annual Progress Report format to make the submission of data as streamlined as possible for solid waste planning regions and other entities involved in the reporting process. To kick off this process, TDEC has formed a working group with representatives from the Solid Waste

Directors Association to gain specific input on what waste diversion goals and measures would work best with the Counties' current activities. Updated information about the working group progress will be shared on the "Objective 1: Updating Goals and Measuring Progress" web page of the [2025 Plan](#) website.

There will be many opportunities to be involved in the implementation of the 2025 Plan. We value the input provided by all of our stakeholders during this process. The best way to participate is to visit our 2025 Plan website often to learn of upcoming public participation specific to the 2025 Plan Objectives and to share your comments and areas of interest at any time via our new [2025 Plan Public Participation comment form](#).

We look forward to continued collaboration with citizens, local governments, businesses, and industries to identify Tennessee's solid waste and materials management goals as well as effective strategies for implementing them.

Best regards,



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