

Oregonians threw away more, recycled less in 2014



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Oregonians sent more garbage to landfills and recycled less in 2014, a new report from the state Department of Environmental Quality shows.

Still, the state beat its recycling target, and continues to rank near the top nationwide for recycling rates, DEQ solid waste analyst Peter Spendelow said.

“We still have a high recovery rate. We’re not sure why the rate dropped,” he said.

Oregon households and businesses threw away a total of 2,572,453 tons of garbage last year, up 5.5 percent from 2013.

That’s 1,298 pounds per person, up 4.4 percent from the previous year’s per capita rate.

The statewide recovery rate, meanwhile, was 51 percent of total waste generated, down from a record 53.9 percent in 2013. The state's legislatively set goal is 50 percent.

Recovery includes recycling, composting, and burning for energy. Rates also can include up to 6 percentage points awarded for local recycling and composting programs.

Marion County residents followed the state trend last year, throwing away more garbage and recycling less.

Households and businesses here tossed a total of 204,991 tons of garbage in 2014, up 5.8 percent from the previous year. The county's recovery rate was 59.7 percent, down from 61.2 percent in 2013 but still beating its target of 54 percent.

Still, Marion County had the state's second-highest recycling rate, trailing the Metro area's 59.8 percent by just a tenth of a percentage point.

The local drop likely is because markets for some recyclables, such as construction wood waste, are drying up, said Bailey Payne, Marion County waste reduction coordinator.

"I expect that is going to continue to be a problem," he said.

New legislation will make the targets even tougher.

Senate Bill 263, passed by the 2015 Legislature, sets new statewide recovery goals of 52 percent by 2020 and 55 percent by 2025.

Goals for each of the state's 35 "wastesheds" also will be revised, and the recycling and composting program credits will be eliminated.

Marion County and the Portland Metro area will have the highest recovery goal, at 64 percent.

Some cities also will be required to satisfy a certain number of elements to provide options for recycling and waste prevention.

Woodburn is the only Marion County city not already meeting that goal with existing programs, Payne said.

The bill also will require all apartment complexes to provide recycling to tenants beginning in 2022.

A companion bill, SB 245, will increase DEQ fees on landfill tipping charges in order to fund more recycling and waste prevention activities. Those include grant programs,

hazardous waste collection events, and a program to help school districts clean up classroom labs that contain old chemicals.

The fees will increase a basic residential garbage bill by 4 cents to 7 cents per month, DEQ estimates.

Using recovered materials rather than new ones can help Oregon meet its greenhouse gas reduction targets, DEQ says.

In 2014, energy savings due to recovery were the equivalent of 220 million gallons of gasoline, the report says. And greenhouse gas reductions totaled about 2.9 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalents, or tailpipe emissions from 660,000 passenger vehicles.

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By the numbers

Most garbage generated per-person, by county:

Morrow 3,355 pounds

Gilliam 2,809 pounds

Umatilla 2,786 pounds

Lane 2,775 pounds

Marion 2,719 pounds

State average: 2,462 pounds

Highest recovery rate (includes credits of 2 percentage points each for waste prevention programs, reuse programs and home composting programs):

Metro: 59.8 percent

Marion: 59.7 percent

Lane: 59.1 percent

Milton-Freewater 57 percent

Linn: 48.2 percent

State average: 51 percent