

SCORE Reporting Recommendations

Report to the Legislature on required 2010 relief to counties and recommendations to amend reporting requirements under Minn. Statute §115A.557, Subdivision 3

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January 2010
Document number: lrw-ps-1sy09

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Introduction

Enacted during the 2009 legislative session, Minn. Law Chapter 37 art 1 s 62(1, 2) mandates county SCORE relief as follows:

- a. **2010 requirement:** Minnesota Statutes, section 115A.557, subdivision 3, paragraph (b), clause (2), that is due April 1, 2010, shall be abbreviated in scope.
- b. **Recommendations report.** The commissioner of the Pollution Control Agency, in consultation with the Association of Minnesota Counties, the Solid Waste Administrators Association, the Solid Waste Management Coordinating Board, and other interested parties shall make recommendations to amend the reporting requirements under Minnesota Statutes, section 115A.557, subdivision 3, in ways that:
 - i. reduce the resources counties employ to collect the data reported, while ensuring estimation methods are consistent across counties and that the data reported are accurate and useful as a guide to solid waste management policy makers.
 - ii. feasibility and desirability of multi-county reporting
 - iii. report submitted no later than January 15, 2010.

This *SCORE Reporting Recommendations* report fulfills the legislative requirement for the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) to abbreviate SCORE reporting due April 1, 2010. This report also makes recommendations to amend the reporting requirements under Minnesota Statute § 115A.557, subd. 3, in ways that reduce the resources that counties employ to collect consistently accurate data which is useful as a guide to solid waste management policy makers. In addition, recommendations regarding the feasibility and desirability of multi-county reporting have been included in this report. This *SCORE Reporting Recommendations* report is available for download from the MPCA's website as Appendix C of the *2009 Policy Report*: <http://www.pca.state.mn.us/>

Development of recommendations for this report

In developing these recommendations, the MPCA consulted with the Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC), Solid Waste Administrators Association (SWAA), and Solid Waste Management Coordinating Board (SWMCB). These initial consultations resulted in the formation of a workgroup composed of members representing AMC, SWAA, SWMCB, and the MPCA. The workgroup's first official meeting was in July 2009, and the last meeting to date was in January 2010. Additional meetings will be scheduled throughout 2010 to continue work on the issues and recommendations found in this report.

The primary goal of this workgroup is to satisfy the legislative mandate as stated above to provide counties SCORE relief. The secondary goal of this workgroup is to develop SCORE and related reporting programs into an improved measurement and evaluation system that is not overly burdensome upon counties, but will lead to an improved understanding of the management of waste and use of resources throughout the state. The workgroup's desired outcomes include reducing the counties' workload by consolidating multiple reports; collecting data that is consistent, useful, and accurate for the analysis of trends; and refining data collection to reflect the current and future needs of policy makers (e.g. greenhouse gas and energy savings, carbon trading, resource conservation, etc.).

Abbreviated 2009 SCORE Reporting Form, due April 1, 2010

The MPCA will be abbreviating the SCORE Reporting Form used to collect information and data for the 2009 reporting year. The abbreviated 2009 form will continue to be used along with the existing MPCA database until a new comprehensive evaluation process can be fully identified, developed, and implemented.

The 2009 SCORE Reporting Form will be abbreviated in two general ways. First, some of the information submitted by counties in the previous year will be preloaded into the online electronic 2009 SCORE Reporting Form. The expectation of the workgroup is that each county will review the pre-loaded previous year's information and will need to make few, if any, changes to reflect 2009 activities in the program survey questions of the SCORE Reporting Form.

Second, data which the workgroup has identified as unnecessary or redundant will no longer be compiled by the MPCA, thereby reducing the county's burden of data submittal. Also, some of the fields that are not involved in calculations will be identified as disabled, which further relieves counties of the need to submit data for 2009.

The following table identifies changes to the online electronic 2009 SCORE Reporting Form. Please note that these changes involve principally survey questions and related data, while actual tonnages as documented by individual counties will continue to be reported in the same manner as prior years.

2009 SCORE program survey questions	Recommendation of workgroup
County solid waste collection system	Pre-load the previous year's SCORE reported data for the county's review; data rarely changes from year-to-year.
County solid waste SCORE staffing	Although required by statute, this data was determined to be unnecessary by both the MPCA and counties; counties will not be required to report the data and the fields will be disabled.
Recycling	Pre-load the previous year's SCORE reported data for the county's review; data is time consuming for counties to gather and is of questionable value.
Yard waste management	Pre-load the previous year's SCORE reported data for the county's review.
Household hazardous waste (HHW) and problem materials	HHW data is also collected by the MPCA in another annual report; counties will not be required to report the data and the fields will be disabled.
Procurement	Pre-load the previous year's SCORE reported data for the county's review; data rarely changes from year-to-year.
Electronic appliances	Electronics data is also collected through other reports; counties will not be required to report the data and the fields will be disabled.
Source reduction checklist	Pre-load the previous year's SCORE reported data for the county's review; data rarely changes from year-to-year.
Revenues	Pre-load the previous year's carry-over and the calendar year SCORE disbursement dollars.
Expenditures	Counties will only need to place a single subtotal dollar amount for each of the separate activities.
Municipal solid waste (MSW) generation	Pre-load the previous year's population without collection services and the percent of commercial/industrial MSW for the county's review; counties will enter current year MSW tonnages.

Recommended 2010 SCORE Reporting Form, due April 1, 2011

The immediate short-term focus of the workgroup was to abbreviate the 2009 SCORE Reporting Form, which is due for submittal to the MPCA on or before April 1, 2010. Following completion of the abbreviated 2009 form, the workgroup unanimously agreed that further work was needed to reduce the burdensome effort required by counties to collect and report data to the MPCA over the long term. The issues and recommendations listed below represent the workgroup's progress to date in this regard, and these recommendations will continue to be refined and developed throughout the year 2010 and possibly beyond.

2010 SCORE reporting issue	Recommendation
Lengthy reporting form includes many questions that may be unnecessary.	Review SCORE questions and evaluate the state's need for the information requested, identify other annual MPCA reports that require the same overlapping information, and evaluate alternate information reporting mechanisms, such as gathering data directly from the point of generation.
Number of full time equivalent (FTE) staff at each county is difficult to quantify and the perception is that the data collected has minimal value.	Eliminate the entire section on county staffing FTE questions; amend statute.
Native American Reservation solid waste management information and data is inconsistently reported to counties.	Continue to encourage counties to partner with local tribal solid waste programs, as many counties have done in the past.
Current recycling goals do not reflect the need to evaluate the system from a waste abatement or resource conservation perspective.	Pursue and study the development of a comprehensive evaluation tool that provides overall measures of success in abating waste and conserving resources.
Detailed revenue and expenditure reporting is burdensome for counties and may not be necessary.	The MPCA and counties should first determine what financial data is needed to carry forward their respective roles in the further development of integrated solid waste management systems, and then identify the best sources for acquiring that data and create appropriate reporting mechanisms for the identified data sources.
Difficulty of obtaining accurate commercial sector recycling and waste management information.	To improve overall data quality and reduce the amount of undocumented data, the MPCA and counties should evaluate alternative ways to more effectively and efficiently collect commercial recycling data; consider collecting commercial data on a regional or statewide basis and streamline estimation methods to improve the accuracy and flow of data.
Inconsistent methods are used for estimating the population that burns and/or buries waste on-site.	The MPCA will work with the counties to provide a more consistent and accurate method for estimating the tons of waste that are burned and buried on-site in the state, giving due consideration to a method that is also easy to update over subsequent years.
HHW and electronic waste data is collected in other HHW and electronic waste reports.	Discontinue HHW and electronic waste general survey questions from the SCORE Reporting Form, but continue to track HHW and electronic recycling tonnages through SCORE as a part of the recycling and resource conservation goal measures.

Source reduction checklist is lengthily and obsolete, and the use of the source reduction credit as a portion of the recycling rate is confusing and inaccurate.	Amend statute and discontinue the current source reduction credit system, but work with waste reduction staff and stakeholders to develop an effective source reduction measure that can be evaluated independently and is part of a new resource conservation measurement scheme.
Yard waste credit as a portion of the recycling rate is confusing and inaccurate.	Amend statute and discontinue the current yard waste credit system, but work with solid waste staff and stakeholders to develop an effective yard waste measure that can be evaluated independently and is part of a new resource conservation measurement scheme.
Estimates of problem materials (PM) and PM not recycled (PMNR) are out of date and confusing, and accurate numbers are very difficult to obtain.	Discontinue the current method of estimating PM and PMNR, and either develop the means to document actual tonnages by collecting data directly from industries, or substantially revise the current estimating method.
Counties use different methods to estimate recycling tonnages, resulting in inconsistent and inaccurate data.	The MPCA and counties need to reach a new agreement on the categories of materials countable towards SCORE, and then discuss the various processes used to estimate recycling tonnages in order to improve the consistency and accuracy of the data reported.
Counties are required to submit numerous reports to the MPCA which contain overlapping data.	Evaluate overlapping data collection and then consolidate reports; improve data coordination to better facilitate goal/volume tables and the certificate of need process; expand reporting to include CD&I materials, the beneficial reuse of materials and the MCCAG goals; develop an evaluation system with a weighted focus moving up the solid waste hierarchy; identify options for the MPCA to implement electronic reporting for all solid waste management activities; and reconfigure data into a more comprehensive measurement and evaluation system that leads to an improved understanding of resource use and the management of waste statewide.

Multi-county reporting

The MPCA has always allowed the option of multi-county SCORE reporting. To date, only two counties and one district have taken advantage of this option. However, with the “centroid” work resulting from the 2009 Integrated Solid Waste Management Stakeholder Process and the new solid waste planning rules enabling multi-county planning, it is anticipated that more counties will take advantage of this reporting option in the future. The workgroup’s recommendation is that when feasible and applicable, the MPCA should continue to encourage multi-county reporting.

Further development of recommendations

During 2010, the workgroup will continue to develop and implement the recommendations that address the issues previously identified in this report. In addition, the workgroup will review the recent recommendations of the Integrated Solid Waste Management Stakeholder Process, which were released on December 30, 2009. Some of this work may require statutory changes prior to full implementation of the final recommendations of the workgroup.

Appendix: A

Overview of SCORE

Minnesota's statewide recycling efforts began in earnest in 1989, when the Legislature adopted comprehensive legislation based on the recommendations of the *Governor's Select Committee on Recycling and the Environment*. This set of laws, commonly referred to as SCORE, initiated a stable source of state funding for recycling programs, as well as waste reduction and the improved management of household hazardous wastes and problem materials. The legislation, SCORE grant dollars, and revenue from counties and local government provide the basis for long-term, flexible programs.

From the inception of SCORE, state tax revenue has provided a long-standing funding source for recycling and waste reduction programs. State Statute § 115A.557 describes how the money from the state is passed on to the county level in the form of annual block grants, the purpose for which the money can be spent, and the eligibility to receive the money.

SCORE disbursement dollars were \$14.5 million until 2002, when the Legislature permanently reduced SCORE block grant dollars by 10 percent, down to \$12.6 million. In 2003, the governor enacted a one-time general revenue unallotment, and the SCORE dollars were reduced to \$11.2 million. In the 2007 legislative session, the Legislature and Governor took action to restore SCORE funds to the levels of 2002, or \$14 million per year.

In calendar year 2008, the state disbursed \$13.8 million dollars in SCORE block grants to eligible counties, which accounted for 24 percent of the total county SCORE related expenditures for that year. Additional state funding for SCORE needs to be considered when evaluating the state's need for additional SCORE related information or new SCORE eligible programs.

State Statute § 115A.557 also requires each county to submit a report by April 1 of each year detailing the previous calendar year activities. The county is to report on how the money is spent, describe the resulting gains achieved and provide evidence that local revenues equal a minimum of 25 percent of the SCORE disbursement dollars received.

The annual SCORE survey collects a variety of data dealing with solid waste generation. The four main components include:

- a general survey section (basic yes-or-no questions dealing with solid waste collection, service fee information, staffing, recycling, etc.)
- revenues and expenditures
- tons and types of materials recycled
- solid waste processing and disposal information

From this information, the MPCA is able to analyze trends in local program efforts, funding, recycling, and solid waste disposal. These four main areas form the basis for the annual report on SCORE programs. The following formulas for recycling rate and total solid waste generated are two of the main benchmarks used to assess a county's success in solid waste management:

Recycling rate = (total tons recycled + source reduction and yard waste credits) ÷ total tons generated

Total tons generated = tons recycled + tons disposed/processed + estimates for on-site disposal and problem materials not recycled

Minn. Stat. § 115A.551, subd. 2a, directs counties to achieve a minimum recycling rate of 35% for counties located in Greater Minnesota and 50% for counties in the Metropolitan Area. Currently, the main indicator of success for many counties, whether real or perceived, is their recycling rate. While an important part of evaluating a county's success, the recycling rate represents only one aspect of an effective recycling program. SCORE does not have any specific goals or measurement scheme in place to properly evaluate a county's success in disposal versus processing, source-separated composting, and overall recycling programs.

The current SCORE survey has evolved since its inception 21 years ago to include a range of questions that also address the solid waste hierarchy. Some of these questions become out-of-date or are no longer necessary and have been subsequently deleted. The last major overhaul and reduction in SCORE survey questions occurred about 10 years ago.

Collection of the SCORE data can be time consuming for the counties and there are problems with the quality of some of the data collected. Nevertheless, the MPCA does use the information collected and submitted electronically by all 87 counties and the Western Lake Superior Sanitary District to calculate recycling rates, the cost of managing waste and to detail trends in waste generation and disposal.