WHEN solid waste managers shifted their focus to recycling in the 1980s, much of the effort went into establishing residential recovery services. Many municipal programs included a commercial recycling component, but did not provide a hands-on affordable service tailored only for the business community.

The WasteCap program was created in some states to fill that niche. Today, states with WasteCap organizations provide small and large companies access to recycling assistance — programs that are saving them thousands of dollars and reducing negative environmental impacts. Most WasteCap services are provided free with the support of memberships, sponsorships and grants. A portion of WasteCap funding does come from fees for some service programs. Other services are considered membership benefits and are offered only to WasteCap members, including free site visits. This article gives a brief overview of some WasteCap organizations around the United States, and some of their services. For information on how to start a WasteCap (or participate) in any state, contact them for assistance.

WASTECAP OF MAINE

WasteCap of Maine is a peer oriented, business assistance program operated under the auspices of the Maine Alliance for Waste Reduction and Recovery (AWRR) and in cooperation with the Maine Environment and Energy Center (E2) and the Maine State Planning Office. It specializes in offering all organizations in the state technical assistance in understanding and managing their waste stream, finding cost-effective opportunities to reduce waste “at the source,” and finding viable outlets for diverting waste from landfills and waste-to-energy facilities through beneficial reuse and recycling. It has successfully assisted more than 400 Maine organizations, including businesses, hospitals, manufacturers and ship builders.

The concerted programming efforts of both the WasteCap of Maine and the Maine Buy Recycled Association enable Maine’s organizations to tap into current technical assistance while developing process flow opportunities to “close the loop” from input to output.

For more information about WasteCap of Maine, contact Suzanne Snowden, Executive Director, (207) 865-0936 or MaineAWRR@aol.com.

WASTECAP OF MASSACHUSETTS

WasteCap of Massachusetts, a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization, was founded in 1994 as a business-state partnership to work with the state’s business community and other organizations on voluntary recycling and solid waste management programs.

In recent years, WasteCap of Massachusetts has also: Created 12 recycling cooperatives to promote small business recycling; Initiated a new effort to promote and implement organics recycling; Joined with the Recycled Paper Products Cooperative to sell 30 percent and 100 percent recycled content copy paper; Jointly developed the Surplus Inventory Donation Program; Developed the annual Race-To-Recycle competition to increase office building recycling; and Moved into the areas of hazardous waste by working with Covanta Energy on mercury product awareness and collection.

The organics recycling initiative has proved to be a big success. Hotels, colleges, restaurants and a fish processor work with WasteCap to spend less for collection and disposal, while increasing recycling levels.
WasteCap of New Hampshire began in 1991 with funding from the EPA, the state, the state's largest business organization — the Business & Industry Association of New Hampshire (BIA) — and individual business contributions. Discussion with the business community encouraged WasteCap New Hampshire to expand its mission to include energy and water conservation as well as waste reduction. For the past year, the program has worked closely with the state's energy office in the New Hampshire Industries of the Future (NHIOF) partnership funded by the U.S. Department of Energy. The NHIOF is working with specific industry sectors to help them identify specific roadblocks to continued economic success. The goal of this program is to ensure that the state's manufacturing base will remain a part of the economy into the future through efficiency upgrades.


WasteCap of Lincoln

WasteCap of Lincoln in Lincoln, Nebraska, was developed in 1994 to provide technical assistance and program management for city businesses. The WasteCap is a public/private partnership between the city, the Lincoln Chamber of Commerce and the Industrialized Nebraskans for Organized Recycling Management (INFORM), a local recycling cooperative that includes over 60 businesses in 70 locations.

Two recent WasteCap projects that demonstrate the direct diversion impact involved establishing cardboard recycling programs for a furniture supplier and a mall. The furniture supplier ended up recycling three tons of cardboard over a three month period, while the shopping mall diverts about one ton/week of cardboard from the landfill.

For more information about WasteCap of Lincoln, contact Carrie Hakenkamp, Executive Director, (402) 472-0888, wastecapalltel.net or www.wastecaplnk.org.

WasteCap Wisconsin

In 1996, WasteCap Wisconsin began as a cooperative effort between the business community and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and was funded by the Recycling Market Development Board to provide waste reduction and recycling assistance for businesses. In January 1998, WasteCap Wisconsin became a private nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization.

While all businesses in the state can receive assistance through WasteCap Wisconsin's regular services as well as specialized, direct services, such as working with commercial and residential construction projects to develop, monitor and document construction waste reduction, reuse and recycling and linking business food residuals generators with haulers, reuse markets, and farmers and other composting facilities to reduce waste disposal.

WasteCap Wisconsin recently helped connect a building owner, contractors and nonprofit organizations to recycle or reuse 74 percent of the materials by weight from two old buildings in Madison (the first two buildings razed for the new Overture arts district). WasteCap organized two reuse days for several nonprofit organizations, including Habitat for Humanity and Goodwill Industries. Findorff & Sons, the project contractor, processed the items identified and tagged by the organizations. The organizations were able to reuse over 1,000 items, including more than 300 light fixtures, approximately 80 solid oak wood doors, oak flooring and cabinets, counter tops, drinking fountains and bathroom soap dispensers. Ceiling tiles and carpeting from the buildings also are being recycled.

Another project the organization is involved in is the construction of an Alliant Energy Corporation building. Alliant Energy Corporation, Opus North Corporation, subcontractors, Green Valley Disposal, and WasteCap Wisconsin are proving that many of the materials in this waste stream can be economically and easily recovered for reuse and recycling. Alliant Energy began constructing its new $57.3 million headquarters in Madison, Wisconsin in May 2000.

For more information about WasteCap Wisconsin, contact Jenna Kunde, Executive Director, 414-961-1100, jkunde@wastecapwi.org or www.wastecapwi.org.

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