

## Construction & Demolition Recycling

Construction and demolition (“C & D”) debris comprises more than 20% of landfilled material in Wisconsin, state studies show. Discarded building materials such as brick, metal and some woods are readily reusable or recyclable. C & D recycling has grown slowly in Wisconsin through the efforts of recycling entrepreneurs, green-minded builders, and mandatory ordinances in the cities of Madison and Fitchburg. Our state has an opportunity to accelerate and expand diversion of C & D material by removing barriers, creating incentives and expanding awareness in five key areas:

- Recycling ordinances/requirements
- Variation in DNR permitting
- Wood Markets
- Alternative uses for C&D fines
- C&D Landfills
- Education and Promotion

**Recycling Ordinances/Requirements.** In many areas of the country with successful C&D recycling programs, states, counties, and cities have incorporated C&D recycling requirements into their state or municipal codes. The effectiveness of this approach can be seen in our neighbor to the South, the City of Chicago. Here 50% of all construction debris must be recycled on qualifying projects (see [Chicago C&D Recycling](#), also following the [ordinance](#) link for specifications). As a result, The City of Chicago is home to 16 mixed waste C&D recycling drop-off locations within the City and 28 additional sites that accept sorted materials. Additional processors and drop-off locations also exist within the greater Chicago area as a result of Chicago and other outlying municipal C&D ordinances. The cities of Madison and Fitchburg have similar, but less aggressive, ordinances.

**Varying Permits.** C&D recycling is relatively new in Wisconsin and as a result many of the permit requirements including outdoor storage/processing and hazardous waste screening protocols vary from facility to facility, creating additional challenges for processors. A more consistent and upfront method of administering permit requirements would allow operators to operate on a more level playing field.

**Wood Markets.** Wood of varying types and quality makes up 20-50% of the C&D waste stream. Some wood, dimensional lumber, pallets, etc are capable of becoming high quality products such as landscape mulch, but lower grade woods including resin based and lightly stained/painted wood also need viable outlets to avoid landfilling. Where environmentally appropriate and with the right environmental testing in place, the use of this lower-grade wood should be encouraged in applications such as boiler fuel, compost, and bedding products.

**Alternative Uses for C & D Fines.** Successful processing facilities need reliable outlets for the small screened "fines" fraction of the C&D waste stream. Nationally, C&D fines are predominantly used within landfills as cover and road base. In Wisconsin, several landfills currently use C&D fines for this purpose, but in Wisconsin with high availability of other manufacturing based alternative landfill cover and road base options, C&D fines must compete for with these other alternative materials. Additional uses for C&D fines should be considered including uses such as land spreading and soil blending.

**C & D Landfills.** In some regions of the state, C & D monofills are able to operate with minimal environmental safeguards and limited state oversight. The fees charged to users of these sites are well below the cost of recycling, making it unlikely that C & D recycling will flourish in those regions so long as the monofills remain in operation.

**Education & Promotion.** DNR's website and outreach could be updated and expanded to reflect current recycling options and help build enthusiasm for C & D debris recovery.

**Potential Sub-Group Members**

C & D processors, state permitting staff and waste generators.