



State Recycling Programs

Background

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) administers three recycling programs, including two programs for awarding recycling grants to local governments and an electronics recycling program for manufacturers. The Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) administers the Clean Sweep program, which awards grants to local governments to collect and dispose of unwanted prescription drugs, household hazardous waste, and agricultural pesticides.

Key Findings

- The amount of time that DNR staff spent administering the three recycling programs declined from fiscal year (FY) 2014-15 through FY 2018-19.
- DNR did not comply with statutes because it spent funds appropriated for recycling administration on activities related to recycling but not allowed by statutes. In addition, DNR reviewed fewer recycling programs in recent years than was statutorily required, and it did not fully comply with its administrative rules, provisions of which are outdated.
- Statutes require DNR to annually award recycling grants in amounts that are determined according to provisions that date to 1999.
- Recycling and consolidation grants covered 16.4 percent of the eligible recycling expenditures reported by responsible units in 2018, compared to 52.7 percent in 1994. The grants covered considerably different proportions of eligible expenditures among responsible units in 2018.
- In 2019, DATCP awarded Clean Sweep grants to 57 recipients in amounts that averaged \$13,200. DATCP did not require recipients to submit documentation to verify all expenditures for which they request reimbursement.
- In January 2020, we surveyed all 1,077 responsible units, 585 of which (54.3 percent) responded. Most respondents indicated that they were satisfied with the recycling program-related assistance that DNR and DATCP provided them. Respondents were less satisfied with the amounts of their recycling grants and Clean Sweep grants.
- In report 20-22, we identify 15 best practices that responsible units can use to comply with state recycling laws and improve the administration of their recycling programs.

Recommendations

We include recommendations for DNR and DATCP to improve their administration of the recycling programs. In addition, the Legislature could consider modifying the statutorily required method for awarding recycling grants to responsible units.



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