

SW MI Materials Management Working Group Agenda

Education

February 2, 2026

10:30 a.m.

Location: Watervliet City Hall

158 W Pleasant St, Watervliet, MI 49098

- 1. Call to Order & Roll Call**
- 2. Approval of Agenda**
- 3. Approval of January 5, 2026 Minutes**
- 4. Review past and current recycling and waste education efforts**
- 5. Review and organize recycling education goals from MMPC**
- 6. Public Comment**
- 7. Adjournment**

Next meeting will be held March 2, 2026 at 10:30 a.m. at Watervliet City Hall, 158 W Pleasant St, Watervliet, MI 49098

**Minutes SW MI Materials Management
Working Group – Education
5 January 2026**

Call to Order: Kalli Marshall called the meeting to order at 10:30 a.m. and present were Jill Adams, Kathryn Hayes, Sargun Kaur, and Lois Koel.

Approval of the Agenda: Kalli made a motion, seconded by Jill, to approval the Agenda and the motion unanimously passed.

Introductions: Each member introduced themselves, gave their background, and commented on their interest for serving on the Education Group.

Officer Elections: Lois made a motion, seconded by Sargun, for Kathryn to serve as Secretary and the motion unanimously passed. Sargun made a motion, seconded by Lois, for Jill to serve as Chairperson and the motion unanimously passed.

Materials Management Overview: Kalli presented a PowerPoint outlining the goals for the working group.

Purpose of Working Group: Kalli outlined the purpose and expectations for the working group.

Next Steps and Interactive Activity: The group completed and discussed brain storming activities covering Outreach Methods, Motivations for Recycling, and Education Topics.

Public Comments: None.

Adjournment: Kathryn made a motion, seconded by Lois, to adjourn the meeting at 11:32 a.m. and the motion unanimously passed.

Respectfully submitted
Kathryn Hayes

SWMI MMP Education WG - Goals Activity: 2/2/2026

Goal: Build a Culture of Recycling and Waste Reduction Through Education, Engagement, and Outreach

1. Create outreach strategies for rural, urban, and hard-to-reach populations.

Hold public events to share programs, goals, and successes.

2. Provide toolkits for schools and businesses to implement recycling education programs.

Establish a school recycling coordinator position for each district to lead recycling education and outreach in schools.

3. Develop a regional education campaign on what, where, and how to recycle and reduce waste.

Build and maintain a digital presence (e.g., “Southwest Michigan Recycles” social media, blog, education programming).

Encourage community-wide visibility by sharing progress updates and goals in multiple formats

Launch outreach through billboards, media, and digital channels to advertise recycling events and promote correct recycling practices.

Develop campaigns that explain why recycling works and address myths to improve participation and reduce contamination.

Educate consumers on waste reduction initiatives, including single-use packaging; promote reusable/recyclable alternatives.

4. Utilize AI contamination technology to deliver targeted, audience-specific recycling messages.

Develop strategies to reduce contamination alongside volume increases, ensuring recyclables are market ready.

Provide educational materials when expanding services to reduce likelihood of higher contamination rates.

5. Explore ordinances or voluntary agreements that require retailers and businesses to support waste reduction and recycling promotion.

Encourage existing businesses within the region to use recycled materials as feedstock.

Encourage business-government partnerships to share infrastructure costs.

Highlight examples of retailers and businesses who successfully promote recycling and waste reduction through certifications.

Encourage retailers to recycle the products they sell and provide clear recycling instructions to customers.

Engage grocery stores and businesses as partners to share recycling information and host events.

SWMI MMP Education WG - Goals Activity: 2/2/2026

Goal: Build a Culture of Food Scrap Recycling and Food Waste Reduction through Education, Engagement, and Outreach

- Adopt a region-wide color/shape/signage food waste reduction scheme
- Raise awareness of the protections granted through the Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act
- Recognize and promote businesses who adopt food waste reduction practices
- Add existing information, best practices & food waste reduction efforts to the County website
- Provide details on which materials each location accepts and do's and don'ts for collection
- Promote food waste competitions in schools
- Develop programs to teach kids about food waste and the importance of reduction
- Engage FFA and 4H clubs in composting efforts
- Normalize food scrap recycling and food donation behavior in schools, restaurants, and households through public, visible commitments to diverting food scraps
- Create an online, comprehensive and interactive map of food diversion sites (including food pantries), and yard waste sites in Cass, Berrien, and Van Buren Counties with hours of operation. Ensure it stays up to date.
- Share resources from MSU Extension, Conservation Districts, and Health Depts

- Collaborate with municipalities, Conservation Districts, Parks Departments, institutions, businesses, etc. to increase education on food scrap diversion
- Share best practices from other communities for municipalities looking to enhance food waste reduction efforts
- Support awareness campaigns for food pantries on social media, newsletters, news sources, and word-of-mouth
- Engage local media and social media platforms to bolster education programs and expand reach
- Promote meal planning before grocery shopping to decrease household food waste
- Provide residential backyard composting tools and resources
- Educate households on best practices for food preservation including freezing, dehydrating, prepping, canning, and storage
- Promote the reuse of leftover menu items creatively in food service