

THE DAILY OAKLAND PRESS

Recycling bill of little impact for Oakland

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LANSING - Legislation creating a statewide recycling coordinator and recycling advisory panel likely won't have much impact - at least not on communities in Oakland County.

"We don't think it will have any significant impact on Oakland County," said Mike Csapo, general manager of the Resource Recovery and Recycling Authority of Southwest Oakland County.

Both Csapo and Jeff McKeen, general manager of the Southeastern Oakland County Resource Recovery Authority, said many communities in the county already have such programs as curbside recycling.

Together, the two authorities are responsible for trash pickup and recycling for 20 communities in the southern part of the county.

A bill sponsored by Sen. Patricia Birkholz, R-Saugatuck Township, creating the recycling coordinator passed the House after passing the Senate in August. It awaits Gov. Jennifer Granholm's approval.

McKeen said the SOCRRA board has not yet taken a position on the bill.

Only 15 percent of total municipal waste was recycled in 2003, keeping Michigan near the bottom of the nation when it comes to annual recycling rates, according to the Michigan Recycling Partnership.

Recycling rates are much higher in the communities served by the two Oakland County authorities.

McKeen said SOCRRA communities had recycled 25.6 percent of their municipal trash as of June 30.

"What that is, is all the recyclable material we get from our communities, plus all the yard waste we get from our communities," he said

Csapo said RRRASOC numbers were even higher, about 32 percent.

"That would include a little over 12 percent recycling and 20 percent composting," he said.

McKeen said a program instituted in August should increase the percentage of material recycled in the 12 SOCRRA communities.

"A program we just implemented takes junk mail and office paper out of the waste stream," he said.

The governor hasn't yet decided whether or not to sign or veto the bill, according to communications director Liz Boyd.

Pro-recycling groups and the state Department of Environmental Quality have concerns about the bill.

"Obviously, the DEQ wants to promote recycling any way it can, but our opposition to the bill came from the fact that it was requiring us to spend money without giving us any new funds to do it," said assistant press secretary Robert McCann.

"It's something like a \$60,000 expenditure as a result, and that's \$60,000 that's going to have to come from somewhere else in the department, so that's one less thing we'll be able to do elsewhere," he said.

Csapo said education is a "key aspect" of any recycling program.

"Another is to make the system as convenient as possible," he said. "We do know convenience is an impediment to some people, so we are constantly striving to make the system more convenient."

Staff writer Bob Gross of The Daily Oakland Press contributed to this story.

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