

# Examples of Regional Governance Systems in Minnesota

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As part of the preliminary analysis on governance alternatives, Ramsey/Washington Recycling & Energy (R&E) staff examined various joint governance models in Minnesota. Staff reviewed regional governing structures in Minnesota, including (but not limited to) solid waste-related entities. This document is a complement to the case studies from R&E's strategic engineering consultant, HDR, on regional solid waste entities across the United States outside of Minnesota.

The examples of Minnesota-specific regional governance systems are organized in four categories:

- Joint powers agreements (JPAs) between local governments
- Regional governance entities created by the Minnesota state government
- Waste management districts
- Regional government entities created locally

## JPAs Between Local Governments

- **Tri-County Solid Waste Commission (Tri-County):** Benton, Sherburne and Stearns Counties, Minnesota ([website](#))

Tri-County was established in 1983. Representation and leadership are provided by the Tri-County Solid Waste Commission Board, which consists of local county commissioner representation based on population. The mission statement of Tri-County is to “provide an efficient waste collection system that includes energy generation, recycling, hazardous waste management and disposal in a cost-effective an environmentally acceptable manner.”

Tri-County has a 20-year contract (through 2031) to deliver about 45% of the solid waste generated in the Tri-County area to the waste-to-energy facility owned by Pope and Douglas Counties. Solid waste haulers are required to deliver waste based on a monthly quota. The remaining 55% of waste is landfilled.

- **Pope-Douglas Solid Waste Management (PDSWM):** Douglas and Pope Counties, Minnesota ([website](#))

PDSWM was formed in 1983 to foster regional cooperation on solid waste management between Douglas and Pope Counties and to provide waste processing services to other counties. PDSWM operates a wide variety of programs and facilities, including a waste-to-energy facility in Alexandria, permitted to manage up to 80,000 tons per year of solid waste, various collection and transfer sites and recycling and organic waste management facilities.

- **East Central Solid Waste Commission:** Chisago, Isanti, Kanabec Mille Lacs and Pine Counties, Minnesota ([website](#))

### *Attachment 3: Examples of Regional Governance Systems in Minnesota*

The East Central Solid Waste Commission is a joint powers board dating back to 1988. The commission owns and operates a solid waste management disposal system consisting of a municipal solid waste landfill (located in Kanabec County), two transfer stations (one located near Cambridge in Isanti County, and the other located near Hinckley in Pine County) and an inactive compost facility (located adjacent to the municipal solid waste landfill).

- **Prairieland Solid Waste Board:** Faribault and Martin Counties, Minnesota

Established in 1989, the JPA authorizes the Prairieland Solid Waste Board to oversee a facility that processes waste into refuse-derived fuel, or RDF (used at Xcel's Wilmarth Facility), and to support other solid waste activities of the two counties.

- **Prairie Lakes Municipal Solid Waste Authority (PLMSWA):** Becker, Clay, Otter Tail, Todd and Wadena Counties, Minnesota ([website](#))

In 2010, Otter Tail, Becker, Todd and Wadena Counties entered into a JPA to form the PLMSWA, which served to facilitate regional cooperation on solid waste management among the member counties. Clay County joined the PLMSWA in 2014.

In 2011, the PLMSWA became owner and operator of the [Perham Resource Recovery Facility](#), a waste-to-energy facility in Perham, Minnesota. The five member counties deliver over 60,000 tons per year of municipal solid waste to the facility. The facility recycles 1,200 tons of material per year and sells one million pounds of steam per day to local businesses (such as Tuffy's Pet Foods and Bongards Creameries), while also employing 33 full-time staff members.

- **Tri-County Solid Waste Joint-Powers Board:** Le Sueur, Nicollet and Sibley Counties, Minnesota ([website](#))

LeSueur, Nicollet and Sibley Counties collaborate to implement an integrated solid waste management system to offer services to residents and businesses. Two commissioners from each county comprise the board. Counties are responsible for ordinance enforcement, while Tri-County staff administer and direct county solid waste and recycling programs, household hazardous waste (HHW) collection, resource recovery, problem materials and educational programs.

### **Regional Governance Entities Created by Minnesota State Government**

- **Metropolitan Mosquito Control District:** Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, Scott and Washington Counties, Minnesota ([website](#))

The Metropolitan Mosquito Control District promotes health by protecting the public from disease caused by mosquitoes, black flies and ticks, in an environmentally safe manner. The district covers the seven county Twin Cities metro area. County boards appoint commissioners to the district board annually. Anoka, Dakota, Hennepin and Ramsey Counties have three commissioners each, and Carver, Scott and Washington have two commissioners each. The district is funded with a tax levy administered by each member county, limited to annual increases according to an index established in state law.

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- **Mississippi Headwaters Board (MHB):** Aitkin, Beltrami, Cass, Clearwater, Crow Wing, Hubbard, Itasca and Morrison Counties, Minnesota ([website](#))

The MHB works to protect and preserve the Mississippi River in Minnesota. It was formed in 1980 as an alternative to the designation of the first 400 miles of the Mississippi River into the National Wild and Scenic River System. Minnesota Statutes §§ 103F.361-377 established a permanent joint powers board. The state mandates the MHB to enhance and protect the natural, cultural, historic, scientific and recreational values of the headwaters region. It has an eight-member board, with each county appointing one county commissioner. Terms are two years, with vacancies filled by the original appointing county.

- **White Bear Lake Conservation District (WBLCD):** White Bear Lake, White Bear Township, Dellwood, Mahtomedi and Birchwood, Minnesota ([website](#))

This district was formed by the State of Minnesota in 1971 for the purpose of taking care of White Bear Lake for all to enjoy. The WBLCD is governed by a 10-member volunteer board of directors made up of two representatives appointed by the city councils of the five municipalities that border White Bear Lake. Each city determines their appointment process. Board members are appointed for three-year terms and there are no term limits for board members.

- **Watershed Districts:** multiple, Minnesota ([website](#))

In 1955, the Minnesota Legislature authorized the creation of watersheds through the Watershed Act. The intent of the Act was to develop water management policies and plans on a watershed basis, because water does not follow political boundaries. Watershed districts are approved by the state's Board of Water and Soil Resources. Each watershed district is governed by a three- to nine-member board of managers appointed by the county boards of commissioners with land in the watershed district and each manager serves a three-year term.

### **Waste Management Districts**

- **Western Lake Superior Sanitary District (WLSSD):** Duluth, Carlton, Cloquet, Hermantown, Proctor, Rice Lake, Scanlon, Thomson, Wrenshall and surrounding townships, Minnesota ([website](#))

This is the only waste district in Minnesota and was created prior to the current law to form districts. WLSSD was established by the legislature in 1971 as a public corporation and political subdivision of the state. The board of directors is a mix of elected and appointed officials serving three-year terms, with nine members from the City of Duluth (four members), the City of Cloquet (three members), municipalities in Carlton County (one member) and municipalities in St. Louis County (one member). The makeup of the board is directed by law.

The district provides solid waste and wastewater services in an area of 530 square miles around Duluth. It regulates all solid waste activities in the area, and owns and operates facilities, providing a full array of solid waste and recycling services.

## **Regional Government Entities Created Locally**

- **Regional Rail Authorities (RRAs):** multiple, Minnesota ([Ramsey County RRA website](#); [Washington County RRA website](#); [Minnesota Valley RRA website](#))

RRAs are created by local governments. Per state law, these entities provide a means whereby one or more municipalities, with state and federal aids as may be available, may provide for the preservation and improvement of local rail service for agriculture, industry or passenger traffic and provide for the preservation of abandoned rail right-of-way for future transportation uses, when determined to be practicable and necessary for the public welfare, particularly in the case of abandonment of local rail lines.

In most cases, individual counties have created distinct regional rail authorities, such as the Ramsey County RRA, Washington County RRA and Dakota County RRA. These RRAs consist of the county board of commissioners, appointed to the regional rail authority board annually. An example of an exception to this structure is the Minnesota Valley RRA, which consists of Carver, Renville, Redwood, Sibley and Yellow Medicine Counties and whose board includes one commissioner from each county board.