



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than was statutorily required](#), and it did not fully comply with its administrative rules, provisions of which are outdated.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.