

Washington County Wood Waste and Diseased Tree Utilization Program



Washington County requests **\$4 million in state funds** for land and equipment purchases to process wood waste and diseased trees into products, thereby protecting air quality, fighting climate change, and supporting the local economy.

Issue At-A-Glance

- Minnesota's Metro Solid Waste Policy Plan requires counties to respond to rapidly increasing amounts of wood waste from diseased trees. However, regional wood product markets are underdeveloped, landfilling of wood waste is not allowed, and spontaneous combustion of stagnant wood chip piles has become a serious risk for local tree care companies.
- Tree service costs have been steadily increasing and are expected to continue to rise. Those in search of affordable solutions may choose unsafe tree work or disposal by dumping or burning, which threatens both public health and the environment.
- State funds will enable the county to purchase the necessary land and equipment to convert wood waste into products like lumber and renewable fuels, thereby expanding access to these products for consumers throughout the region and creating sustainable material supply chains for local wood product manufacturers to scale up processing.
- Processing wood waste into usable products helps protect residents from volatile tree care fees and smoky air. Also, by keeping wood in its solid form, Washington County will avoid unnecessary CO₂ emissions in accordance with Minnesota's Climate Action Framework and benefit the entire region by reducing demands on strained disposal solutions such as District Energy in St. Paul.

Support

- Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
- Lower St. Croix Valley Fire Department
- Partnership on Waste and Energy

Previous Considerations

No previous consideration.

No Action

If the state funds are not provided, Washington County residents will continue to face rising tree service costs, experience poorer air quality due to accidental and intentional burning of wood waste piles, and miss an opportunity to capture the economic value from local trees needing removal.

Financial Implications

- Washington County: \$5.5 million
- **State of Minnesota: \$4 million**

Total estimated project cost: \$9.5 million

