Minnesota Resource Recovery Association on HF 10

The MRRA applauds the ultimate objective of this legislation (HF 10), but we are concerned that the means of obtaining that objective, as set out in the current draft, will be a setback to equally important policy in the areas of solid waste management and greenhouse gas mitigation. We request, and recommend, that WTE continue to be considered a renewable resource in Minnesota.

A great deal of the opposition to WTE being considered renewable stems from concerns regarding air emissions. Indeed, concerns regarding the environmental impact of pre-21st century WTE facilities were legitimate. Emissions controls and monitoring in that era were rudimentary or completely lacking. Following the adoption by the USEPA of the Maximum Achievable Control Technology (MACT) standard in the 1990s, WTE facilities (nationally) invested approximately $1 billion on pollution control and continuous emissions monitoring upgrades. The pollution controls employed in today's WTE facilities are state-of-the-art. The result has been a striking reduction in air emissions. Upon completion of implementation of the MACT standard USEPA wrote, *"Upgrading the emission controls of large combustors exceeds the requirements of the Clean Air Act Section 129 standards is an impressive accomplishment"*, and "*The performance of the MACT retrofits has been outstanding"*. The impact of contemporary WTE facility operations on human health and the environment is a very small fraction of that which prevailed in the last century.

WTE is an essential part of Minnesota's waste management hierarchy along with waste reduction, recycling, organics composting and improved landfill design and operation. The implementation of this hierarchy is endorsed by the USEPA and the MPCA due to the reuse/recycling/conversion of a seemingly endless flow of garbage, and the consequent reduction of risk to public health and the environment. It has long been a goal, shared by the State of Minnesota and the MRRA, to manage waste as a resource; a resource that will, for the foreseeable future, require management and utilization. The proposed elimination of WTE as a source of renewable energy is contrary to that state policy.

The MRRA member counties using WTE are proven partners in the fight to protect Minnesota's land, air, water, and public health. They have included WTE in their mix of solid waste management tools in support of sound environmental practice as defined by Federal and State guidelines. Significant financial and human resources have been invested in these programs. These counties have some of the highest rates of recycling, waste reduction, composting, and landfill abatement in Minnesota. Any actions to cripple or eliminate components of those systems – WTE in particular – will only serve to hinder environmental protection and resource management progress in the future.

We recommend that WTE continue to enjoy renewable resource status. We are not alone in this position:

- One third of our state's counties rely on WTE facilities as part of their solid waste and energy solutions.
- WTE was correctly designated as a renewable energy source, contributing to our state's renewable energy portfolio and reducing the need to use fossil fuels in energy production.
- Twenty-three states and the District of Columbia define WTE as a renewable source of energy.
- The U.S. EPA Clean Power Plan recognizes WTE as a renewable source of energy.
- The U.S. DOE Energy Policy Act of 2015 recognizes WTE as a renewable source of energy.

Waste-to-Energy (WTE) facilities:

- Provide locally produced, renewable and dependable base-load energy.
- Provide back-up for interruptible, zero emission energy sources (e.g., wind and solar) without the use of conventional fossil fuels.
- Extract valuable recyclable materials from the waste, before and after combustion, that otherwise might go into landfills.
- Produce a significant net benefit in the climate change issue by reducing landfill methane emissions.
- Conserve land for future generations by being a viable alternative to landfilling.
- Are subject to emission standards that are among the most stringent in the world with facilities investing millions of dollars in sophisticated air quality control equipment, driving emissions to historic lows while maintaining the amount of tonnage processed.

Landfills have significant environmental impacts:

- Minnesota's landfills are filling up quickly; requests for new landfills, and expansion of capacity at existing landfills, are currently being considered.
- Landfills are a significant source of methane emissions.
- Landfill gas collection systems are imperfect; leaks are routine.
- Methane generated from decomposing waste is 23 times more potent than CO2 in terms of its impact on climate change.
- Those landfills capture some methane for energy production but production of energy is only a small fraction of the amount captured by WTE processes.
- Clean energy legislation should focus on reducing greenhouse gases that impact climate change.

WTE facilities provide significant economic impact in the communities they serve with long-term, well-paying jobs and locally produced energy, which when sold can help reduce costs to solid waste customers and fund programs that reduce waste. In a society where so much waste is generated, and as part of an integrated system, these facilities must continue to survive, if not thrive.