

Marathon County Solid Waste Department

Strategic Plan 2026-2030

October 2025 DRAFT

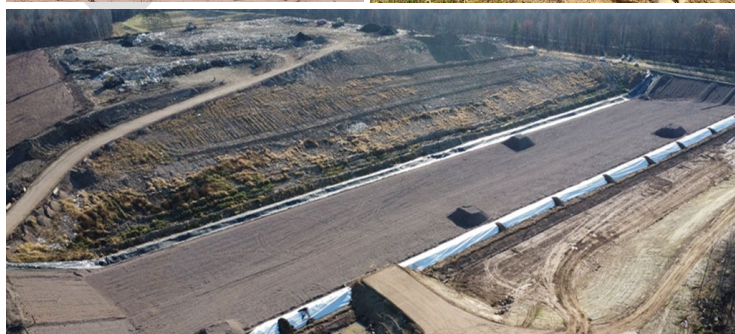


Table of Contents

Resolution.....	3
Acknowledgements.....	6
Mission Statement.....	7
Vision Statement.....	7
History/Background.....	7
Solid Waste Site Overview.....	8
Operations and Disposal.....	8
Education and Recreation.....	10
Planning Process & Purpose.....	11
Goals and Objectives.....	11

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RESOLUTION R--?._-2026

Resolution adopting the Marathon County Solid Waste Management Board Strategic Plan 2026-2030

WHEREAS, a Strategic Plan is a roadmap for organizational development by determining what services to provide to customers and how this is accomplished; and

WHEREAS, under Wisconsin statute the Marathon County Solid Waste Management Board is authorized under Wisconsin Statute Chapter 59.70(2) to develop, manage, operate and plan for a countywide solid waste system; and

WHEREAS, Marathon County Solid Waste Management Board has adopted a strategic plan that clarifies its mission, vision, goals, objectives, and strategies to accomplish those goals; and

WHEREAS, Marathon County Solid Waste Management Board's adopted strategic plan has a short-term horizon (5-years), but will be subject to periodic updating and revision; and

WHEREAS, Marathon County has an adopted Strategic Plan that supports collaboration, economic development, environmental protection, and accountability; and

WHEREAS, Marathon County has an adopted a Comprehensive Plan that supports environmental protection and economic development; and

WHEREAS, the Solid Waste Management Board Strategic Plan 2026-2030 is aligned with Marathon County's comprehensive and strategic plans; and

WHEREAS, the Solid Waste Management Board approved its Strategic Plan 2026-2030 at its **Insert Date** , 2026 meeting; and

WHEREAS, the Marathon County Environmental Resources Committee has reviewed and approved the Solid Waste Management Board Strategic Plan 2026-2030; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Supervisors of the County of Marathon does hereby adopt the attached Strategic Plan 2026-2030 for the Marathon County Solid Waste Management Board.

Dated this **Insert Day** day of **Insert Date January** 2026.

ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Fiscal Note: Adoption of the Strategic Plan is and of itself will not result in any expenditure of County funds. The action items all have fiscal implications which will be considered and reported during the term of the Strategic Plan as part of the annual budget of the Solid Waste Department.

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STATE OF WISCONSIN)

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SS. COUNTY OF
MARATHON)

I, Kim Trueblood, County Clerk in and for Marathon County, Wisconsin, hereby certify that the attached Resolution #R-??-26 which was adopted by the Marathon County Board of Supervisors which was held on Insert **Date** **January**, 2026.

SEAL

Kim Trueblood

Marathon County Clerk

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Acknowledgements

Solid Waste Management Board Members

Supervisor Thomas Seubert – Board Chair

Supervisor Jean Maszk – Board Vice Chair

Supervisor Allen Drabek

Supervisor Tim Sondelski

Supervisor Jason Wilhelm

Town of Ringle Rep - Al Christensen

Citizen - Marilyn Bhend

Citizen - Kerry Brimmer

Citizen - Harlyn Woodward

Membership:

The Solid Waste Management Board shall be appointed by the Marathon County Administrator and be comprised of nine (9) members. Five (5) members shall be Marathon County Board Supervisors, one (1) member shall be a representative of the Town of Ringle Board, and three (3) shall be citizen members.

Duties and Responsibilities include the following:

1. General policy advice and recommendations for the operations of solid waste management.
2. Remain updated on changing legislation regarding waste disposal and recycling and ensure County compliance.
3. Recommend and monitor composting, waste-to-energy, recycling, and household hazardous waste disposal programs.

Staff:

David Hagenbucher, Solid Waste Director

Eric Olson, Operations Manager

MISSION STATEMENT

To provide the residents, businesses and organizations of the region with a cost-effective, comprehensive integrated waste management system. The system consists of programming, education and consulting services on waste reduction, recycling, composting and hazardous waste management, along with landfill disposal, with landfill-gas-to-energy production.

VISION STATEMENT

We are the integrated waste management system of choice, fostering economic development, while protecting the environment and public health.

What does the Marathon County Solid Waste Management Board **DO** to ensure success?

“We manage financial resources efficiently and effectively. We empower residents to manage waste to their benefit. We advance recycling efforts. We enable alternative uses for waste.”

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE SOLID WASTE DEPARTMENT

Marathon County began operating the Ringle landfill on December 1, 1980, to safely dispose of municipal, commercial, and industrial waste. The County owns 575 acres for waste management. Area A operated from 1980 to 1993, reaching capacity at 2.2 million cubic yards. Area B, with 31.5 acres and 3.35 million cubic yards of capacity, closed in 2024. The active landfill, Bluebird Ridge, spans 60 acres, holds 8 million cubic yards, and is expected to last 15 years.

The Solid Waste Department runs as a self-sustaining business enterprise without county tax support. Its mission goes beyond waste disposal, serving as a community resource. The facility also features recreational trails, including the Ice Age Trail and CWOCC mountain biking trails.

A landfill gas collection system has operated for nearly 40 years, with over 80 wells capturing methane for energy use. In 2023, Marathon County partnered with Viridi Marathon LLC to produce pipeline-grade renewable natural gas. In 2025, a new processing facility was completed, and gas began flowing into the ANR Pipeline along Highway 29.

With 12 full-time employees, the department handles up to 1,000 tons of waste daily, offering additional services like a medication dropbox, sharps collection, composting, and recycling education. About 150 vehicles are weighed in and out each day. Fees cover all operational and long-term care costs, ensuring continued enterprise-based operation without tax funding.

SOLID WASTE SITE OVERVIEW (Make this section a graphic or image)

1980: Area A Opens

27 acres, 2.2 million cubic yards capacity. Closed 1993 after reaching capacity with 1.5 million tons of waste.

1994: Area B Opens

30 acres, 3.35 million cubic yards capacity. Closed 2023, final closure approved by WDNR in 2025.

2014: Bluebird Ridge Opens

60 acres, 8 million cubic yards capacity. Current active landfill with 15-year expected lifespan and 6 million cubic yards remaining.

2025: Renewable Natural Gas

Partnership with Viridi Marathon LLC implemented, processing landfill gas into pipeline-grade renewable natural gas.

OPERATIONS AND DISPOSAL

State certified operators are always on the site when waste is delivered for disposal. The operators observe each load that is placed in the site. Unacceptable materials, such as appliances and electronics, are removed and stored for eventual recycling. Waste is compacted using specialized equipment to densities that exceed 1,800 pounds per cubic yard. The compacted waste is covered daily to minimize odors, blowing material and fire. A common daily cover used at the Marathon County Landfill is bottom ash from the Weston Power Plant.

Leachate Management & Disposal

Leachate is the wastewater that is collected at the bottom of a landfill. The site generates approximately 10 million gallons of leachate annually, collected through underground piping systems. This wastewater must be hauled off site and treated before discharge into local waterways. In 2019, the Department's nearly 40-year relationship with Domtar Papermill for the disposal of leachate ended. As a result, leachate disposal has become the department's most expensive item in terms of the overall budget. Currently, leachate is hauled off site to either Stevens Point Wastewater Treatment to Plover Wastewater Treatment. Over the past 5 years, the team has worked to lower these costs by strategically managing stormwater. Work will continue to focus on capping, surface management, slope stability, and channeling stormwater away from the landfill areas, efforts that have yielded very positive results thus far. Due to rising

concern for emerging contaminants and inability for municipal treatment plants to meet new State effluent regulations, the Solid Waste Department is exploring other methods of leachate treatment.

Household Hazardous Materials (HHM)

In 1997, Marathon County Solid Waste began collaborating with the Health Department to collect household hazardous waste for proper disposal. In 2010 the collection was moved to the Solid Waste Department location and currently operates 5 days a week. It is now known as the Hazardous Household Waste Collection Program.

Accepted from all counties (Marathon County residents: free; others: disposal fees apply).

Examples include:

- Oil-based paint, aerosol paints
- Solvents, cleaners, degreasers
- Fuels, gasoline, antifreeze (≤5 gallons)
- Pesticides, herbicides, hobby chemicals
- Sharps (in approved containers; no fee for residents)

Not Accepted: Ammunition, explosives, compressed fuel cylinders, Freon, latex paint, pharmaceuticals, radioactive materials, and fire extinguishers.

Reducing Waste

While recycling is valuable, it is resource intensive. Reducing waste conserves natural resources, promotes healthier habits, and helps cut greenhouse gas emissions. Less waste means less reliance on landfills, which, while safe, aren't ideal long-term solutions. Waste reduction starts with small, intentional choices: refuse, reuse, compost, and rethink what is needed. The Marathon County Solid Waste Department promotes education and options to reduce waste, including:

- 1. Compost Food Scraps*
- 2. Recycle Plastic Bags & Film—Properly*
- 3. Bring Your Own Containers*
- 4. Refuse What You Don't Need*
- 5. Buy Used*
- 6. Choose Reusables*
- 7. Avoid Packaging*
- 8. Make Use of Scraps*
- 9. DIY Personal Care Products*
- 10. Recycle – When Reducing Waste is Not an Option*

EDUCATION & RECREATION

The Marathon County Solid Waste Department does more than just manage landfill operations. Staff are trained to provide disposal education and tours.

Tours can include:

- Open landfill site
 - See first-hand how materials we all dispose of get handled, and ask questions directly to the experts
- Recycling, waste reduction, and reuse efforts
- Hazardous household materials collection
- Miles of trails, native plant restoration, abundant wildlife, and bluebird nesting boxes

The Marathon County Solid Waste Department is lucky enough to be home to over 575 acres of beautiful, diverse land in Central Wisconsin. The Department has worked hard over the year to make the site available for public use and to share the many wonders of the land. Visitors can enjoy astern bluebird nest boxes found along the trails and even harvest native plants that can be transplanted to make your own native landscapes around your home or school. The site also provides trailhead access to the Mountain Bay State Trail and the Ice Age Trail.

PLAN PURPOSE AND PROCESS

In April 2013, the Solid Waste Management Board began the work of building its first strategic plan. That plan would set the direction and work plan of the Solid Waste Department for the three to five years following adoption of the plan. It took over ten months of work and great collaborative efforts between the Board, department staff and other stakeholders, to evaluate the strengths, problems, opportunities, and threats of not only the department, but the entire waste industry, to complete the Plan. Ultimately, the Plan served as the overarching framework, along with the County's Strategic Plan, for everything from daily operations of the Solid Waste Department to the creation of new programs and partnerships that would help both the department and the county achieve its goals.

In early 2019, and again in 2025, the Board updated its Strategic Plan. Each time setting the direction for the next five years. The plan is designed to help the Marathon County Solid Waste Department achieve its vision of being the “integrated waste management system of choice, fostering economic development while protecting human health and the environment” and by doing so helping Marathon County achieve its comprehensive vision to be the “healthiest, safest, most prosperous county in the State.”

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, ACTION-STEPS, AND MEASUABLE RESULTS

The County regularly prepares a strategic plan to focus county work efforts and financial resources for a 3-to-5-year period. The Solid Waste Strategic Plan provides the foundation for the strategic plan process. The strategic planning process puts work into action by prioritizing and focusing County efforts, as well as identifying benchmarks and other measurable items to monitor success over time.

This Plan is structured into goals, objectives, and actions. The example below explains the differences between the three and illustrates how the Plan is structured.

Goal: Goals are statements about Marathon County's aspirations in the topic area.

Objectives: Objectives are vision statements which provide direction to the subtopics within the areas of each goal.

Actions: Actions are key steps which should be taken on the road to meeting the objective and reaching the goal.

Measurable Results: Measurable Results are specific, quantifiable, outcomes that can be tracked to determine progress toward goals.

Goal 1. Protect and enhance Groundwater and Air Quality.

- Operate landfill following state and federal requirements.
 - Action item: Continue to comply with inspections and minimizing violations.
 - Action item: Continue to adhere to Solid Waste Permit and Air Permit regulations.
- Contribute to maintaining environmental compliance.
 - Action item: Work with stakeholders to reduce open dumping and burning.
- Implement best management practices for leachate management.
 - Action item: Reduce leachate volumes and manage via approved and cost-effective methods.
 - Action item: Reduce stormwater infiltration/contribution to leachate.
 - Action item: Pursue on-site treatment system for leachate management.

Measurable Results for Goal 1:

1. Remain compliant with inspections and permits. (Ongoing)
2. Provide two educational events/campaigns a year to educate on proper disposal methods. (Ongoing)
3. By 2030 construct an on-site treatment facility for leachate.

Goal 2. Maximize economic opportunities from landfill and solid waste operations.

- Operate landfill in an efficient manner while covering all expenses.
 - Action item: Maximize savings through equipment procurement, operating methods, and maintenance plan.
 - Action item: Explore alternative resources and technology to operate landfill (example: GPS, fire suppression, spray on cover systems)
 - Action item: Develop a site-plan that incorporates best use of existing property
- Build business model for financial sustainability.
 - Action item: Explore additional revenue streams such as landfill gas, compost, recycling, water treatment, concrete, shingles, construction waste, rocks, timber
 - Action item: Explore procurement of construction materials through alternative methods (harvest clay from County-owned property).
 - Action item: Work with finance professionals on annual budget development.
- Implement and conduct ongoing evaluation of a financial plan.
 - Action item: Invest financial resources to our benefit.
 - Action item: Complete annual reconciliation with partnering counties (Portage and Shawno).
 - Action item: Incorporate into a 5-to-10-year financial plan.

Measurable Results for Goal 2:

1. Solid Waste overall financial standing remains *positive*. (Ongoing)
2. Reduce the number of loans/borrowing by the Solid Waste Department. (Ongoing)
3. By 2030, create a policy with County Administration to establish percentage of indirect county costs to be included in annual Solid Waste budget, and gradually increase the share of Solid Waste revenue returned to the County to help cover its expenses.

Goal 3. Build relationships with community, haulers, municipalities, businesses, and organizations.

- Demonstrate community contribution and value with services and programs.
 - Action item: Conduct education on value added services and recycling opportunities via open houses, towns associations, site tours, etc. (Ongoing)
- Support haulers by increasing level of service that is provided.
 - Action Item: Hold annual meetings with haulers to increase customer satisfaction and minimize concerns.
- Support Host Township – Ringle

- Action item: Follow Siting Agreement.
- Action item: Collaborate via the “Landfill Monitoring Committee.”
- Continue coordination with Portage and Shawno counties to identify long-term partnership elements that are beneficial to all three counties.
- Support recreational opportunities on site
 - Action item: Continue to support recreational options including mountain bike trails.
 - Action item: Increase information and/or outreach related to recreational opportunities at the landfill site.
 - Action item: Evaluate 80 acres of property located at County Road Q and Weston Avenue to determine future use and/or sale of the property.

Measurable Results for Goal 3:

1. Hold 10 on-site tours each year through 2030 to promote landfill provided services and programs, including recreational opportunities.
2. Maintain relationship with Town of Ringle by minimizing nuisance complaints by 50% by 2030.
3. By 2030 make a recommendation to County Board related to future use of County Road Q and Weston Avenue property.

Goal 4. Provide Leadership on Waste, Recycling, Diversion, Environmental Education and Outreach to begin the transition from Waste Management to Resource Management.

- Support Recycling and Waste Diversion on site and throughout the community
 - Action item: Maintain Recycling Cooperative Agreements with Municipalities.
 - Action item: Explore options for recycling transfer or MRF in Marathon County.
 - Action item: Conduct tours and education on resource management
 - Action item: Compost all yard materials that arrive on site.
 - Action item: Expand waste to energy opportunities via Renewable Natural Gas partnership with Viridi.
 - Action Item: Explore alternative resource management strategies on site (solar).
 - Action item: Increase access for tires, metal, shingles, concrete, electronics, appliances
- Sustain County-wide programs that support Hazardous Waste and Universal Waste Diversion
 - Action item: Standardize Household Hazardous Waste Program.
 - Action item: Explore building capacity to accept batteries, bulbs, and oil.
 - Action Item: Expand collection of sharps and drugs across the County.

- Interact with State policies and regulations.
 - Action Item: Support legislation or policy changes that promote best management practices, such as efforts relative to battery recycling and PFAs management.

Measurable Results for Goal 4:

1. Annual increase in number recyclable items including tires, appliances, shingles, etc.
2. Volume of gas delivered to Viridi for RNG generation increases. (Currently recorded every 15 secs and measuring at 1000cfms. The target would be at or above 1500cfms.)
3. # of education events conducted each year
4. # of tours conducted each year
5. By 2030 develop plan for solar power on landfill cap – PowerCap.

Goal 5. Sustain safe and productive materials management.

- Improve site accessibility and traffic routing
 - Action item: Continue enhancing signage and communication.
 - Action item: Continue coordinating with WI DOT to improve safe access.
 - Action item: Support operational improvements that minimize risk and reduce liability with visitors.
- Enhance safety performance and policies for all visitors and site personnel
 - Action item: Maintain fire response plan.
 - Action item: Focus on increasing education related to safety at the landfill/with disposal operations.
 - Action item: Provide staff with proper training and safety education.
- Support emergency management response efforts
 - Action item: Maintain ongoing coordination with emergency response agencies.
 - Action item: Continue involvement with countywide planning initiatives

Measurable Results for Goal 5:

1. Increasing # education events or training. Distribute media on battery fires.
2. Reduction in number of workers compensation claims
3. Reduction in number of incident reports
4. Reduction in # of fires onsite