

**BRIEF**

# **New York governor calls for statewide plan on recycling market collapse**

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**Dive Brief:**

- New York's Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) will host multiple stakeholder meetings "with representatives from industry, local government, state and federal agencies, and the public" to develop new solutions for struggling local recycling programs and "identify open markets to utilize recyclables."
- According to a press release, the move comes at the behest of Governor Andrew Cuomo. He directed the agency to "identify new actions to improve recycling in New York in response to changes in global recycling markets."
- The initial meeting is scheduled for August 29 at the DEC's Albany headquarters. The Times Union reports that an agenda is still being formulated, but the event is expected to function as a "moderated roundtable."

**Dive Insight:**

When contacted by Waste Dive last November, the DEC said that "although some municipalities have expressed concerns," it didn't know of any altering their programs. The agency recommended focusing on education to produce a cleaner stream and said any decisions around specific changes resulting in disposal would be a local matter. The state's 2010 solid waste plan did set reduction targets and envisioned the potential need for a disposal waiver system if markets declined, but no such framework was ever created.

Since the beginning of this summer, news stories have been appearing on a near weekly basis about financial struggles in upstate cities or counties. The issue has also caught the attention of state and national elected officials, adding to the impetus for action. So far only a handful of local governments have canceled or altered their programs in any way, but depending on what happens with pricing in the months ahead, there could be more to come.

Companies such as Waste Management, Casella Waste Systems and other local names are all seeking various types of rate increases for collection or MRF processing, leading to budget surprises and difficult negotiations for many local governments. A new \$120 tip fee at a MRF run by Waste Connections subsidiary County Waste has had especially large effects in the Albany area.

Stories have begun to come out about similar situations on Long Island, and conversations indicate these market effects are also being felt in the five boroughs, but there has been far less reporting on that to date.

The lengthy Cuomo press release included few specifics on what the DEC actually can or will do to help cope with this global commodity issue, though the agency has plenty of precedent to follow. Oregon, Washington, California, Minnesota and Massachusetts — among others — are some of the most commonly discussed states where environmental agencies are engaging on the topic. Industry companies and associations have of course been talking about this issue all along, so can be expected to show up to the first stakeholder meeting with their own proposals as well.

### Recommended Reading:



Times Union

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