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Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme

PacWastePlus
PACIFIC WASTE MANAGEMENT

This initiative is supported by **PacWastePlus**-a 85-month project funded by the European Union (**EU**) and implemented by the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (**SPREP**) **to sustainably and cost effectively improve regional management of waste and pollution.**

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PALAU

Waste Data Profile

June 2025

Palau and PacWastePlus

Palau is one of fifteen countries to participate in the SPREP implemented and European Union's Delegation to the Pacific funded PacWastePlus Programme. The PacWaste Plus Programme aimed to improve waste management activities across the islands and strengthen the capacity of governments, industries, and communities to manage waste and protect human health and the environment.

About Palau

Palau is an island nation of 16 states and over 340 islands, of which only nine are inhabited. Koror Island serves as the main commercial and administrative hub, home to around two-thirds of the country's population. It is connected by road to Babeldaob, the largest island in Palau. The country's two national landfill sites are located on these two islands. Malakal Harbor, situated in the sheltered lagoon of Malakal Island next to Koror, is Palau's primary port.

Palau has a relatively small population of around 18,000 people, with a strong economy driven by tourism, fisheries, and agriculture. Approximately 70% of the population resides in the city of Koror, located on Koror Island. While Koror is the former capital, the current capital is Ngerulmud, situated on the island of Babeldaob.

Palau is vulnerable to climate change from sea level rise and increased extreme weather events such as storm surges, drought, and typhoons. These hazards, when realised will generate increasing amounts of disaster waste from damage sustained to infrastructure and the environment.

Government, Policies, Strategies, and Responsibilities

Palau has developed significant environmental legislation and strategies for solid waste management, most notably the Solid Waste Management Plan (2006-2016) and National Solid Waste Management Strategy (2017-2026) (NSWMS). There is no overarching Solid Waste Act, but rather a combination of various laws and regulations.

The responsibility for managing solid waste is divided among various institutions in Palau, which include:

- **National government:** The Palauan national government has the responsibility of creating legislation, strategies, and policy frameworks for waste management. It is also responsible for solid waste management through the Bureau of Public Works, which includes infrastructure planning, managing the national landfill, and raising public awareness about solid waste management issues. Additionally, the government coordinates with state governments to address solid waste issues and implement the NSWMS.
- **State government:** The state governments of Palau are responsible for household waste collection, the management of recycling facilities and projects, dumpsite management, composting programs, and waste education programs.

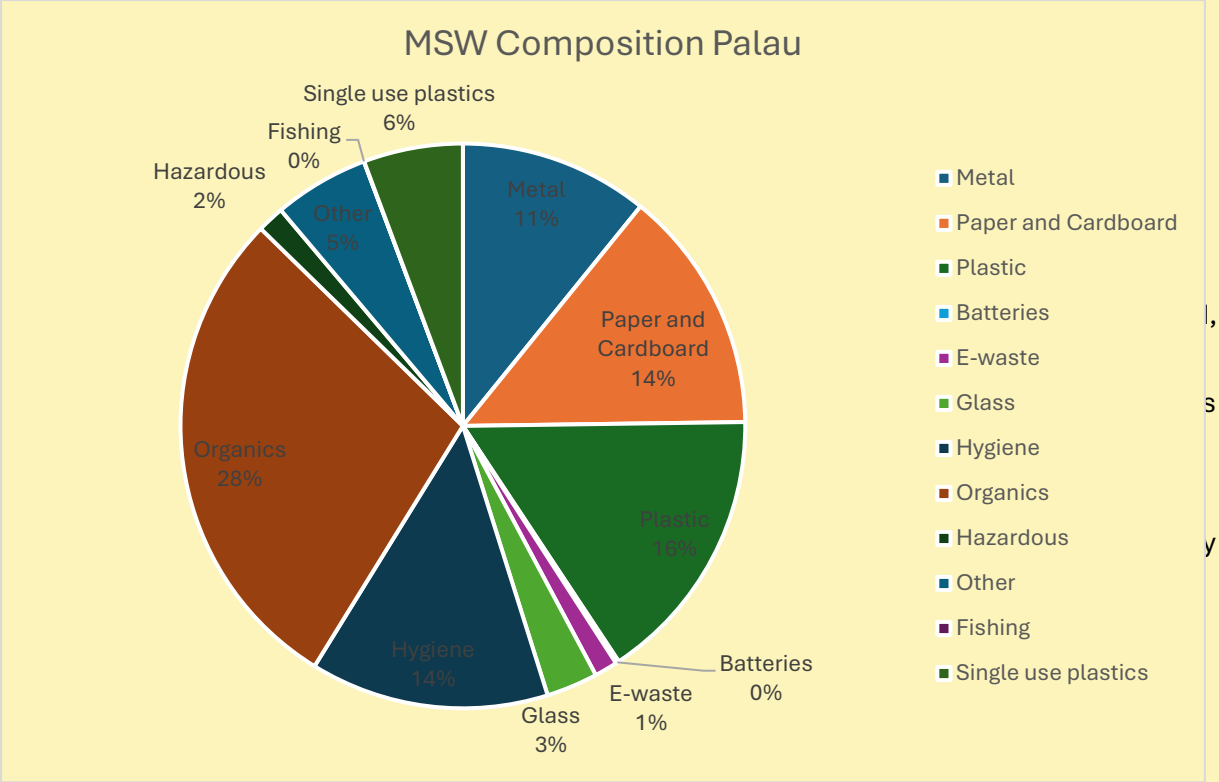
Waste Practices

Waste collection services in Palau cover approximately 66% of the population, with each state responsible for managing its own waste systems. In Koror State, weekly collection is provided to all residents, with waste managed at the national landfill. Green waste is collected on request. In outer island communities, waste is typically managed through a self-haul system. In 2011, Palau introduced Container Deposit Legislation covering aluminium and steel cans, plastic and glass bottles, and tetra pack containers.

Core KPIs	Result
1. Count / capacity of modern waste facilities	**5 / unknown**
2. Count / capacity of unregulated waste facilities	**2 / unknown**
3. National recovery rate (%)	**22%**
4. Per capita waste generation rate (kg/capita/year)	**82.4**
5. Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) composition (%)	Error! Reference source not found. **Next Page**
6. Household waste capture rate (%)	**65%**
7. Household collection service coverage (%)	**66%**
8. Fulfilment of MEA reporting requirements (%)	**43%**

Supplementary KPIs	Result
1. Cost of disposal to landfill ($/tsonne/annum)	**No data**
2. Weight of waste disposed (tonnes per annum)	**8,082**
3. Weight of waste recovered (tonnes per annum)	**2,250**
4. Volume and type of stockpiled hazardous waste (m3)	**Asbestos: No data** **E-Waste – 0 stockpile** **Healthcare and pharmaceutical waste: no data** **Used oil - 1892.71 m^3** **Used tyres – 13,839** **Obsolete chemicals – 0**
5. Marine plastic pollution potential (tonnes per annum)	**69%**
6. Awareness and support of waste management services (%)	**89%**
7. Proportion of strategic waste management initiatives implemented (%)	**73%**
8. Commercial waste capture rate (%)	**96%**
9. Commercial collection service coverage (%)	**96%**

10. Total weight of disaster waste disposed (tonnes per annum)	**0**



National Waste Analysis Snapshot

About the Data

Population estimates used to calculate performance indicators and weight audit data are based on the national census data from 2020.

The audit data provided for 'urban' areas (Koror), 'semi-urban' areas (Badeldaob), and 'rural' areas (Badeldaob, Kayangel, Angaur) is assumed to be representative of the rest of the country.

Commercial waste service coverage reporting has relied primarily on survey information conducted during audits of commercial business waste.

Waste facility registers were collected in 2025 from waste facilities where possible, certain pieces of information were not provided by the reporting deadline

Data Collection Challenges

Collecting updated data for certain components of the waste facility registers from 2025 has been challenging. Key information, such as the capacity of landfills and other waste facilities, has not been provided. Additionally, no data has been made available regarding operating costs.

Highlights

- There is a successful CDL scheme in place in Palau that is reporting good recovery rates.
- There is strong public awareness and support for waste management services, with 89% of the population engaged.
- The commercial sector demonstrates a high waste capture rate of 96%.

Emerging Issues

- Palau shows strong potential to improve its 22% recovery rate through initiatives like the CDL scheme, compost-for-plastic incentives, biofuel production from non-PET plastics, and glass recycling—demonstrating leadership in small-island circular economy models.
- Progress is hindered by data gaps on facility capacity, informal disposal (e.g. backyard burning), and private sector contributions; improved data collection and consistent reporting across states is essential.
- Marine plastic pollution is a visible and pressing issue in Palau. A recent half-day coastal cleanup collected three tonnes of waste, much of which is believed to have drifted in from neighbouring countries such as the Philippines, highlighting the transboundary nature of marine debris and the need for regional cooperation to address ocean pollution. This report estimated 69 tonnes of mismanaged plastic waste may be entering the marine environment annually.

Waste Management Practices and KPI Narrative

Waste Facilities and Waste Handled Each Year	Palau has five modern waste facilities, including the National Landfill, which opened in 2021. This site includes several innovative features such as a CDL redemption centre, composting facilities, an energy recovery centre, and even a glass-blowing workshop using recovered glass bottles. Two unregulated dumpsites remain on outer islands, but limited data is available about their usage. 8,082 tonnes of waste were officially disposed of, while 2,250 tonnes were recorded to be recovered, contributing to a national recovery rate of 22%. However, data gaps, particularly around facility capacity and waste handled informally, limit full understanding.	**Hazardous Waste Stockpiles**	There are currently no stockpiles of obsolete chemics in Palau. Hazardous waste is often exported, particularly the used oil which is collected by Utilities Corporation in Aimeliik state, stockpiled and then shipped to Philippines.
Household per Capita Waste Generation	Palau's per capita household waste generation is estimated at 82.4 kg per person per year, based on sampling from 7 of 16 states (covering about 85% of the population). This relatively low figure reflects both the small population and subsistence-based lifestyle in rural areas. Waste audits converted household data to per capita rates using national census information, but more complete sampling would help refine these estimates.	**Disaster Waste**	There is no data available on asbestos or healthcare, pharmaceutical waste.
Household Waste Statistics	Of the estimated 1,232 tonnes of household waste generated annually, about 804 tonnes (65%) are captured responsibly through collection or regulated disposal. Collection service coverage reaches approximately 66% of households, mainly in more populated areas. Waste composition audits show organics make up 28.5% of household waste, followed by plastics (15.9%) and paper/cardboard (13.95%), highlighting a strong case for expanding organic waste recovery systems, such as composting.	**Marine Waste**	To date, no disaster waste has been recorded in Palau.

Commercial Waste Statistics	Commercial waste management in Palau is relatively well-developed, with both commercial waste capture and collection service coverage at 96%. These figures are based on estimates from employee counts and business surveys, but lack direct national figures. These figures likely would change with more targeted data collection.	**Strategic Initiatives and MEA Reporting**	Marine plastic pollution poses a growing threat to Palau's coastal and marine ecosystems. During a half-day cleanup, volunteers collected three tonnes of waste, much of it believed to have blown in from neighbouring countries like the Philippines. The estimated potential for marine plastic pollution is 69.12 tonnes per annum, primarily from mismanaged household waste.