

**Solid Waste Master Plan Workgroup on Reducing Waste Generation
Summary Notes of Meeting #1, March 3, 2009**

Introduction

Seventeen people attended the first meeting of the Solid Waste Master Plan Workgroup on Reducing Waste Generation. Greg Cooper of MassDEP explained that the intent of the work group is to identify systems, programs, policies that will reduce the generation of waste. The focus of the discussion should be on efforts to achieve source reduction. Other workgroups are focused on related issues, including increasing recycling and building markets. MassDEP handed out a summary of previous efforts to reduce waste in Massachusetts, which is being provided to the workgroup members along with this meeting summary.

Key Issues Discussed

Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)

The group discussed EPR at length, including the following comments and suggestions:

- holding manufacturers responsible for end-of-life products will encourage them to design products better and reduce waste through product design.
- MassDEP should support the electronics EPR bill and pursue EPR Framework Legislation that would enable MassDEP to identify products for which manufacturers would be required to establish EPR programs. California, Washington, and Minnesota are developing framework producer responsibility requirements. It is important to have industry at the table in developing a framework EPR approach.
- Canada now has a national action plan for EPR, which focuses in part on more sustainable packaging.
- More often than not manufacturers are already motivated to reduce material use as a matter of efficiency, even without EPR.
- EPR would be most applicable to packaging, household hazardous products, and electronics.
- When thinking about EPR one should understand the potential negative impacts on recycling companies, in that EPR may reduce the amount of materials sent for recycling, rather than disposal.
- One problem is the quality of products developed today versus in the past. A suggestion was made to extend warranty requirements which might encourage the development of more durable, longer lasting products.
- The concept should be “If you sell it you take it back.” This would involve a role for retailers and maximize consumer convenience.
- A number of localities across the country are forming local product stewardship councils to advocate for EPR. One has started in Vermont. EPR can take the management burden and cost of unwanted products off the municipality and place it with the manufacturer.

The group discussed whether EPR programs like product take back have been found to reduce waste generation and whether this may vary depending on whether manufacturers are held responsible for their own products versus a market share of the overall product stream. The group also discussed whether it would be more effective to require manufacturers to take particular steps to reduce product or packaging wastes or to reduce the toxicity of products. There is an EU study that has been done on the effects of EPR requirements.

Encouraging Consumers to Reduce Waste

The group then discussed how to educate and motivate consumers to reduce waste.

Suggestions in this area included:

- Consumers need to be educated on the issue of reducing waste and the impacts of their purchasing decisions. How the consumer looks at products on the shelf and the products they ultimately purchase can drive the manufacturing of products and product packaging (e.g., to promote greater product visibility on the shelf.)
- Walmart has pushed suppliers to meet a number of requirements to reduce waste (e.g., selling detergent in concentrate form only) which provides a more level playing field across all products in the store.
- Manufacturers are the ones who do the most education about products, so the responsibility should be placed on them to do education about reduced packaging, product design changes, etc.
- The group discussed PAYT as a strategy to influence residents to reduce waste and discussed how best to increase the pace of adoption of PAYT programs. Suggestions included mandatory PAYT legislation and/or using the municipal cherry sheet to provide incentives for municipalities to adopt PAYT (or penalties for municipalities that do not adopt PAYT). Alternately, there could be a requirement for municipalities to adopt a maximum trash container size.
- The group also discussed an alternate PAYT approach whereby residents would not pay any per bag fees up to a certain size container, but would have to pay for bags for any trash beyond the first container.
 - Some municipalities are looking at a 65 gallon trash container, while others are looking at a much smaller container size (e.g., 34-36 gallons)
- Representative Falzone has proposed legislation that would allow residents to deduct the cost of PAYT bags from their state income taxes.
- The group also discussed reducing phone book deliveries by enabling residents to either opt out (or opt in) to receive phone books and reducing disposable bag waste through bag fees or taxes.

Business Waste Reduction

The group had a short discussion about opportunities for businesses to reduce waste. It was pointed out that, especially at larger businesses, there may be a lot of bang for the buck to reduce a lot of waste at just one location.

Follow Up

We agreed on several follow up steps for workgroup members for the second meeting:

- Identify any studies or program assessments that report on the benefits of EPR approaches specifically for reducing waste
- Look at other EPR examples more closely – e.g., Canada-wide EPR proposal
- Develop other suggestions for incentives for consumers to reduce waste
- Develop other ideas for how to drive waste reduction at businesses
- Focus on proposals and systems that can be implemented at the state level.

Next Meeting

The next workgroup meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 11 at MassDEP in Boston. We agreed to push back the start time for the second meeting from 9:00 to 9:30, so that the second workgroup meeting will be held from 9:30 AM to 12:30 PM.