

Solid Waste Master Plan Workgroup on Reducing Waste Generation Summary Notes of Meeting #3, March 25, 2009

Introduction

Ten people attended the third, and final, meeting of this workgroup on Reducing Waste Generation. Greg Cooper provided a recap of the group's last meeting and asked for any comments on the notes that were prepared. No comments were provided.

EPR and Local Product Stewardship Councils

The group discussed how extended producer responsibility/product stewardship could be implemented if pursued. There was discussion of regional or state level Product Stewardship Councils that bring together local governments to build support for EPR as a possible model. Examples mentioned included the regional councils on the West Coast and Midwest, or the Vermont Product Stewardship Council. There also is a state Product Stewardship Council under development in New York. It was suggested that state level councils are important because of state specific laws and regulations.

Packaging

The group discussed how to reduce the amount of packaging in products that is used and sent for disposal. Packaging reduction could be focused on reducing the packaging that consumers receive or reducing transportation and delivery packaging that is handled by manufacturers, distributors, and retailers. There was mention of several companies that are making progress in this area and a recommendation to recognize those companies. The group suggested that an assistance program that would facilitate transfer of knowledge and experiences in reducing packaging would be helpful for companies. One participant described their company's successful effort to reduce packaging. It was mentioned that capital equipment investment may often be necessary as part of the effort to reduce packaging and the state may be able to help with that. The group recommended that MassDEP examine efforts in Europe on packaging reduction. Some specific suggestions included:

- Having a packaging take-back requirement
- A campaign to leave packaging at the store
- Incorporate a rating on packaging waste/efficiency into Consumer Reports product evaluations
- Provide recycling instructions on the packaging
- Rate packaging in some manner and publicize the ratings

State Procurement

The group discussed how reduced packaging can be incorporated into state procurement. The group discussed the need for the Mass Highway Department to change construction specifications to promote recovered materials and require recovered materials in its own job specifications. The group suggested a variety of other ways to use procurement to influence waste reduction including bid specifications that require less packaging/shipping materials, using federal EPEAT standards for electronics, incorporating LEED specifications into state projects, and requiring contractors to perform EMS's and/or waste assessments to limit waste in products provided to the Commonwealth.