

Solid Waste Master Plan – Education Workgroup Meeting #2 – March 16, 2009, 9 am-noon

WHAT EDUCATION STRATEGIES SHOULD WE PROPOSE FOR THE SOLID WASTE MASTER PLAN? How will we get messaging out? How could we start up a 10 year campaign to get residents and business to recycle more?

Mass Recycles Paper Campaign (www.massrecyclespaper.org) is a good example of a statewide multi-year education campaign:

- Target audience: Residents first. Businesses will be targeted once the residential campaign is up and running
 - Focus: What types of paper can be recycled
 - How long has campaign been working: two years
 - Outputs: Tools have been created, including a statewide uniform list of the types of paper that can be recycled, mailers, ads. The Campaign aims to get these tools used throughout the state, to create a consistent message.
 - Effort required: much effort has been needed to identify sponsors, raise funds and convince municipalities to participate.
 - Sponsors have been identified through haulers and MassRecycle staff efforts to identify companies with an interest in promoting paper recycling. Sponsors generally have been private entities.
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- MassDEP should collaborate on education campaigns with groups focused specifically on recycling (e.g., the Paper Campaign), but also with other organizations that will promote recycling as part of other messages (e.g., watershed organizations and other nonprofit environmental groups).
 - MassDEP should provide information about what materials can be recycled throughout the state. There is a particular need for information about containers. We know what types of paper can be recycled across state. What are the types of bottles, cans, etc that can be recycled? MassDEP should focus on the 80-90% of materials that can be recycled anywhere in Massachusetts. Don't try to explain all the nuances.

Sponsorship.

- There are businesses that are increasingly interested in putting their name on recycling messages, to associate their firm with a “green” image.
- Businesses make decisions about affiliating with these messages based on their estimates of return on this type of marketing
- MassDEP should highlight green businesses and communities on a regular basis (possibly quarterly)
- Waste Cap's Race to Recycle program was a very successful way to recognize businesses that did a stand-out job of recycling. Waste Cap used to have participating business report their recycling data, and Waste Cap staff audited the data to verify it. This program needs to be replaced
- WasteWise is a national program that EPA sponsors. MassDEP has made a big effort to promote it here. Participating businesses have access to technical assistance, and set goals.
- MassRecycle has annual statewide awards for businesses.
- Create a certification program for waste haulers that could recognize high-performing haulers that is similar to DARP.

- Concern was expressed about how citizens can know whether a company's claims about their "green" practices are true. MassDEP should create a "Consumer Reports" – type of directory for recycling, and evaluate how companies' claims measure up to what they are really doing (how green are the companies really?).
- Need to promote companies that are doing the right things, across all sectors, but we also need to make sure that the companies are not "green washing".
- Can we use a business awards program to leverage sponsorship for education initiatives?

Messaging:

- Over the next ten years, we should be focusing on recycling all materials – not just paper and containers.
- Because recycling and waste management are only small fractions of a businesses' environmental costs, messages focused on these topics don't generate much interest. More successful programs have broadened their messages to more inclusive environmental stewardship (e.g., recycling, waste reduction, water conservation, energy efficiency, etc.). Two programs were discussed as good examples:
 - Devens Eco-Star focuses on all-inclusive environmental stewardship (recycling, water conservation, energy efficiency, etc). The program provides different levels of recognition for participants, depending on how much a company is doing. At the lowest level, the company can put an Eco-Star symbol on their door, which employees can see. At a higher level, the company can fly an Eco-Star flag, which is visible to the public. Approximately 40 businesses are involved.
 - WasteWise provides forums and information that have now expanded beyond recycling. Businesses are interested in sustainability as a whole.
- Messaging needs to address how much money can be saved through recycling
- Waste exchanges provide information that is critical to businesses for their recycling efforts.

Potential Partners

- Work with trade associations and associations of certified professionals to create recognition programs such as green business associations, and "Sustainable Business Networks" (as several Chambers of Commerce have run)
- It would be nice to have regional business assistance coordinators for businesses, like MACs for businesses, or "BACs"
- Municipalities are being asked by businesses and apartment complexes for presentations and other information about how to be more sustainable. MassDEP could provide standardized information that municipalities could distribute.
- Municipalities have a lot of clout. The state should take advantage of it.
- It would be much easier to share information if the state had an FTP web site that would allow posting and on-line distribution of large education files between the state, municipalities, and non-profit organizations.

Other

- "I Waste Not" (a private company) is working with NERC to create a web-based network of waste exchanges. Their software is being designed to make it easy for people to update their information. Once the system is up and running, annual costs for towns to participate are expected to be minimal. These could be covered by MassDEP grants to municipalities (if grant funds are available).

- Other web-based data bases (e.g., Earth's 911) are much more difficult to use and therefore people don't update their information frequently.
- We need an expanded and accessible "Recyclopdia".
- Could MassDEP create a web-based framework that would empower towns to update their information and calendars easily? The biggest cost is creating the template.
- Waste Cap's Recycling Services Directory was one database that was frequently updated and very popular.
- How can we make information available about the various Freecycle organizations that exist?
- Get residents of apartment buildings to pressure landlords

Questions:

- How are/were the Paper Campaign, Eco Star, and Waste Cap funded?
 - How can we use enforcement to drive education?
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SCHOOL PROGRAMS

What is already happening:

- MassDEP's The Green Team – see www.thegreenteam.org
 - Encompasses Recycling, Air, Water, Climate Protection
 - grade level k-12
 - over 800 teachers participating in program
 - 112,000 students involved in this program
 - Program Staff: one MassDEP staff member and 20 hours/week of consultant (APT)
 - all materials can be found on-line
 - by registering and reporting MassDEP can keep track of who's participating, and provide certificates, levels (what is a "level"?) and prizes
 - provides recycling equipment to schools
 - collaborates with other outreach and school programs, e.g., Mass Teacher's Association, etc.
- Covanta and Casella both have "Go Green" initiatives.
- There are also private efforts to educate K-12 students about recycling and other sustainability issues: e.g., Project Green Schools (www.projectgreenschools.org), TLCRecycles (www.TLCRecycles.com/), etc
- Massachusetts' Environmental Education group would be a good group to work through, to leverage other environmental initiatives

Goals for school-based recycling education programs should be:

- Getting schools to establish a recycling program
- Educating students about what to recycle, how to recycle, why to recycle, etc.

Considerations for establishing a recycling program at school:

- Both faculty and staff need to support the program for it to be successful
- Recycling programs need to be school wide, including custodial, kitchen, administrative staff, etc. as well as academic staff. Requests to establish a program and support can come from the municipality

- Funding is frequently a problem. Funds are needed to purchase equipment, hire a recycling vendor, etc. Sometimes, recycling services may be paid for from a non-school municipal budget, so that the people using the services aren't connected with the cost of providing the services.
- There are several state-wide organizations of school officials that may be able to educate their members about the importance of recycling in schools: e.g., Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents, Mass. Association of School Business Officials, and a newly-organized association of facility managers.
- Some thought that it is only worthwhile to start district-wide recycling programs in schools, and others thought that recycling can be started in individual schools and then expanded to the district. The approach might need to be flexible: what will work in one town may not work for all.

Educating students about recycling:

- Programs need to address all age groups (pre-K through 12), and should be offered consistently throughout a student's time in a school system.
- Need material appropriate for every level
- Covanta uses PTOs (because parents are usually taxpayers) to encourage schools to invite company staff to do educational programs
- Make educational programs fun and easy – more groups will want to become involved
- Sports celebrities can be used to get students interested
- MassDEP should work with the parties who are already conducting environmental education. The agency should approve materials and certify educators to deliver them, to ensure that the messages are delivered consistently.
- "Green" lessons need to be incorporated into standard curriculum and approved by the school board. MassDEP is working with an environmental education committee that has been set up by the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs and the Department of Education, which may provide a forum to talk with the Department of Education about getting recycling and other "green" educational units into the state-approved curriculum.
- Some districts are allowing "green" educational units to be incorporated into Extra Learning Time sessions (a pilot program now being implemented in some school districts), where they reach students who don't have to work on core studies related to MCAS.

Other:

- The Public Broadcasting System has lots of educational programming regarding recycling and green building, especially geared toward small children. Education happens in many places in addition to schools. Public television may be a way to reach very young children (pre-school ages).
- Messages need to be clear and consistent
- The MA Department of Education is asking for input about Community Service Learning Grants, which may provide some resources for environmental education.

Next meeting: The third and final workgroup meeting will be held on March 26, 9 am to noon, in Worcester at the MassDEP Central Regional Office, Commissioner's Conference Room (1st floor).

DRAFT 3/18/09

- Goal will be to look at and revise a rough draft of an education strategy based on workgroup discussions for MassDEP to consider in developing a draft Solid Waste Master Plan.

Can't attend Education Workgroup Meetings? If you have signed up with MassDEP to participate in this group but can't get to a meeting, use our blog to let the group know what you are thinking about this topic: <http://swmp.wordpress.com> (Note: If you do not have a free WordPress account, you will need to register before posting comments to the blog.)