

## *MassDEP Reduce & Reuse (R&R) Working Group Virtual Meeting*

Wednesday, April 28, 2022 | 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM | Meeting Summary

The R&R Working Group is a forum for discussion of source reduction and reuse regulations, policies, and programs in Massachusetts. The group was established to help in the development of a MassDEP Strategic Reduce and Reuse Action Plan as outlined in the 2030 Solid Waste Master Plan. To learn more about the working group and find past meeting materials, visit: [MassDEP Reduce & Reuse Working Group](#)

This meeting was held virtually and facilitated by Brooke Nash, Branch Chief, Municipal Waste Reduction Program, MassDEP [brooke.nash@mass.gov](mailto:brooke.nash@mass.gov). A total 63 people participated in the 4/28/2022 meeting. The discussion sections reflect both written and spoken comments and questions from participants.

Link to Presentation Slides for April 28, 2022:

[MassDEP Slide Deck](#) and [Reusable New England Slide Deck](#)

Link to Recording: [April 28, 2022 Virtual Meeting](#)

### Agenda:

10:00 – Welcome & Housekeeping

10:10 – Review Final Plan, Progress & Updates

11:00 – Guest Speaker: Lauren Fernandez, Reusable New England

11:30 – Next Steps for Implementation

11:50 – Announcements

12:00 – Adjourn

### Welcome & Housekeeping:

Brooke Nash opened the meeting at 10:05 am and reviewed the purpose of the R&R Working Group, its objectives, meeting protocols, and that meeting is being recorded. This is the 12<sup>th</sup> virtual meeting of the Working Group and the first after a hiatus of 10 months, during which DEP incorporated stakeholder comments on the draft Reduce and Reuse Action Plan (released June 2021), presented the final plan to MassDEP's senior management, incorporated changes (to be reviewed later in meeting) and published the [Final Reduce & Reuse Action Plan](#) on DEP's webpage in December 2021.

### Review Final Plan

Brooke gave recap of how the Plan was drafted:

- This group did deep dives into key material streams that represented areas of need and which have the greatest potential for increased reduction, reuse, repair, salvage (see Slide 4).
- We examined the over-arching topics of creating a culture of reduce/reuse/share/repair and how repair networks and legislation can support this.
- We identified barriers and challenges to advancing progress in these areas
- And finally, after brainstorming nearly one hundred strategies, we consolidated and grouped them into categories to create a framework for the Plan.
- We call these “levers” – there are seven of them (see Slide 5). Some strategies could fit into more than one of these levers.
- We received substantive written comments from 17 stakeholders during a comment period that ended July 15, 2021. A document that summarizes the [Comments and MassDEP’s responses](#) is on website
- We requested and received comments from Mass Dept of Public Health.
- Then the plan was reviewed by Commissioner’s Office and Dept of Energy and Environmental Affairs; 95% of the draft plan was approved.
- Original vs. Final Plan (slides 7-8) were in Legislation section and in the section that address barriers in the Mass Food Code (slide 9).

## Progress/Updates

Brooke reviewed progress made since last July, noting that while the Plan underwent internal review there was much work done to keep moving forward on various reduce/reuse/repair/share initiatives. This included:

- Recycling Dividends Program (Slide 11): Expansion of reduce reuse, repair, share criteria which gives points (and \$) to municipalities for implementing specific best practices and programs including hosting repair/fix-it events; tool library/Library of Things; swap shops at municipal transfer stations; local bylaw, ordinance or regulation banning at least two single use plastic items (bags, polystyrene food containers, straws, etc); deconstruction regulations and/or pilots.
- State Food Code and Reusable Containers (Slide 12): DEP staff met with Mass Dept of Public Health staff to learn more about the Mass Food Code and what it does and doesn’t permit relative to consumer provided reusable containers at food service establishments. Mass adopted the 2013 Federal Food Code; it is silent on reusable containers but explicitly allows reusable coffee cups. DEP staff also met with Kelley Dennings who is looking across the US on this issue, also engaged with [UPSTREAM](#). Next step: explore a stakeholder process that mirrors what DEP used in 2015 to create

[guidance/best practices](#) for donating surplus food at restaurants. Meetings were held with local health departments, restaurant/café owners, Mass Dept of Public Health and others to discuss food donation and create best practices since the Mass food code was also silent on this practice. If we pursue the same approach for reusable containers, the outcome would be a framework that could assist local boards of health to make a determination to allow reusable containers while maintaining food safety and public health.

- New Waste Disposal Bans (Slide 13): textiles, mattresses, lowered food waste threshold to ½ ton/week; [effective Nov 1, 2022](#). MassDEP is seeing significant growth in the textile and mattress recovery businesses in anticipation of the disposal ban.
- School Waste Reduction (Slide 14): new ad hoc group led by Gail Sowerder Garron with Julia Greene (Mass DEP [Municipal Assistance Coordinators](#)); Focus is K-12 public and private schools. It meets quarterly; 3 subcommittees formed to date: Adoption of school recycling and zero waste policies; Conversion from single-use foodware to dishwashers and durable foodware; and organics collection at schools. Email Gail at [gbernard@beverlyma.gov](mailto:gbernard@beverlyma.gov) to join meetings and/or Google Group.
- MassDEP Micro-Grants (Slide 15): for reuse/repair/share initiatives; rolling application, up to \$5,000 each, awards done quarterly. [Grant guidelines](#), [Awards list](#) and [application](#) on website. For more information contact Janice Pare [janice.pare@mass.gov](mailto:janice.pare@mass.gov)

## Guest Speaker: Lauren Fernandez, Reusable New England

Brooke introduced Lauren Fernandez, Zero Waste Policy Analyst at the Conservation Law Foundation and member of the Organizing Committee of Reusable New England (RNE). Brooke sees RNE as a key collaborator in advancing the objectives of the Reduce & Reuse Plan. MassDEP staff are attending RNE meetings monthly and serving on subcommittees. Lauren's [Presentation Slide Deck](#) is on MassDEP's website.

Reusable New England meetings are open to anyone; Brooke encouraged folks to participate. To do so, join via website [www.ReusableNewEngland.com](http://www.ReusableNewEngland.com) (click the committees tab, then join General Membership group). Alternatively, send an email to [Contact@reusablenewengland.com](mailto:Contact@reusablenewengland.com)

Highlights of Lauren's presentation:

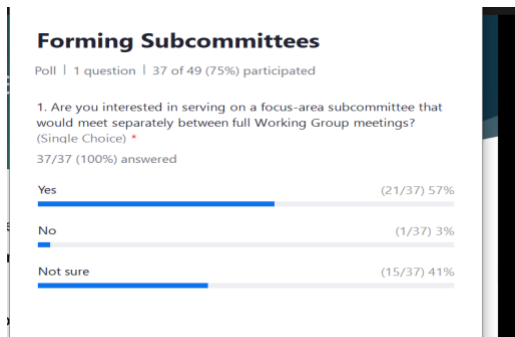
- Big corporations embrace a single use convenience culture
- MassDEP waste characterization study- shows where there is opportunity

- Recycling is important but not enough- only 9% of plastics ever made have been recycled, many single use plastics are not recyclable and individuals don't have a choice, *options not accessible to most people*
- Plastics pollute at all stages of lifecycle
- RNE wants to reduce plastic production and better manage plastics in the environment
- Working with UPSTREAM- national leader in reuse policy
- RNE launched last summer, 20-25 active members
- Org structure: still in infancy
  - Not an official 501c3, all volunteer at this stage
  - Org committee = leadership and 4 subcommittees
- Normalizing Reusables
- Why reusables?
  - Food service ware, bags
  - Safer and more sustainable, saves \$\$
- More than single use bans
  - What do we replace with?
  - Don't create waste in the first place
  - Goal= implement reusables as a norm (exceptions are necessary)
- Reuse policy
  - Skip the Stuff: local level, SUPs only upon request
  - Reusables for indoor dining
  - Reusables in schools, college campuses, and workplaces
  - Advocacy for changes to food codes (NoCal- McDonald's, mandatory reusables)
- Reuse in business
- Local Reuse Efforts
  - RNE: hub of support for reuse advocacy, fact sheets
  - [World Refill Day](#) = June 16<sup>th</sup>
  - Skip the Stuff Campaign
- Long Term Goals- make reuse the norm
- Get Involved!

## Next Steps for Implementing Reduce & Reuse Action Plan

Brooke acknowledged the constraints in MassDEP staffing to implement the Action Plan since the work will be done by existing staff. She underscored the need for stakeholders to engage actively in its implementation, working in conjunction with DEP staff. She acknowledged that stakeholders would have to work independently of MassDEP should they wish to promote legislative initiatives since MassDEP does not engage in legislative activities.

The next task is to form subcommittees of the Working Group to focus on specific issues. These subcommittees will be organized around the priority strategies in the plan, focusing on short-term priorities to start. Volunteers will be key to this next phase. Brooke presented two ways of “slicing the pie” (Slide 19: Short Term Priorities List) or Slide 20: Material Streams/Levers). A live poll was done: Are you interested in serving on a focus-area subcommittee that would meet separately between full Working Group Meetings? Results indicated strong interest (see below).



Brooke reminded folks that the Action Plan is a living document. As sub-working groups are launched, we may re-arrange priorities or decide on slightly different directions than originally envisioned.

### Open Discussion/Q&A:

- Petros Palandjian: @my business, Good Filling, does charge a \$1 fee per new virgin plastic bottle and instead encourages folks to return the bottles to get the \$1 off.
- Plymouth Health Dir- guidance suggesting restaurants allow customers to bring own containers in.
- Lauren: CLF research about what is permissible in 6 New England states, see this link for PPT: [Foodware Regulations Presentation - Mckinnon.pptx - Google Slides](#)
- Reusable coffee cups- can the shop refuse?
- Lauren- educate MA businesses about what is permissible, connect BoH to coffee shops
- Susan Purser 350MA Berkshires- glass recycling- source separated more valuable
- Brooke: work together to create understanding and address concerns with food establishments/food safety
- Dishcraft- outsource cleaning service, also recircable.com, also someone on MV Island Eats. Reusable dishware for restaurants that want to buy in and participate. It can save a business \$\$\$. Another group called Perpetual- bringing reuse to city-scale, looking for partners, e.g. colleges and large companies . [Cities — Perpetual \(perpetualuse.org\), Recircable](#)
- Business provided containers are acceptable for reuse

- Next steps for Implementing a Plan- Oregon was first with a plan in 2016, lots of good action in MN, MA is #2. We need a FT person to work on Reuse
- Working Groups will be needed for implementation- the more stakeholder engagement- the more ownership of all here.
- RNE: SUPs and food service
- DEP will look at other subgroups- we have limited bandwidth- will rely on those to step up and chair a workgroup- DEP staff can help co-chair, this is a big ask
- Working Group Discussion:
  - Google form survey to flesh out and elicit feedback? Prioritize work areas
  - Evelyn Matsumoto: experience with google groups and offering to help
  - Pam Howland: anyone interested in Deconstruction; Pam will to help organize a sub-work group on this. Pam wants to connect with community health and workforce development community
  - Cross cutting issues for all subgroups: EJ, health, workforce development (Missy)
- Action Plan is a living document- as we start on path, we may identify dead ends or course corrections
- NERC- Mary Ann Remalodor- they have just started a new Reuse Strategy workgroup around the US. Brooke will start meeting with that group. We don't want to duplicate efforts, will integrate our work with others.
- Build Reuse (decon and wood) = national nonprofit (Portland OR, San Antonio, Atlanta, Chicago, Detroit,) annual conference [Build Reuse](#)
- Invite Susan Cascino to talk at a future meeting about Boston's pilot project, also Brookline is working with Metropolitan Planning Council through a grant to explore policies and framework for deconstruction

## Announcements:

**The Great Exchange**, a Devens, MA-based non-profit led by [Dona Neely](#), was featured in a national [story](#) in USA Today's newspaper network and coverage on [CBS](#). The Great Exchange (TGE) received a MassDEP grant in its early years. You can take a [virtual tour](#) of TGE's inventory. TGE collects unwanted and surplus materials from businesses in the Devens Industrial Park and beyond; dozens of schools, nonprofits, municipalities and arts programs "shop" The Great Exchange at Devens to get all kinds of goods at less than 50% of the retail price.

## YELP's new feature for eco-friendly attributes

YELP now includes in review for food service a place to rate on eco-friendly criteria including:

Bring your own container allowed (available for restaurant and food businesses)

Plastic-free packaging (available for restaurant and food businesses, as well as applicable shopping businesses)

Provides reusable tableware (available for restaurant and food businesses)

**Free Webinar: part of Circular City week (shared by UPSTREAM)**

Many free webinars were offered at this event, including panels on reuse. May 2-8, 2022.

Highlights of the conference are [here](#).

**Reminder: Reduce & Reuse Google Group is live and waiting for users!**

Brooke reminded the group about the Google Group “MA Reduce & Reuse Network” which DEP created to allow info sharing among stakeholders. It functions like a listserv; no moderator but DEP approves the member requests. Over 100 people are signed up but there’s very little being posted. Next time you hear about a free webinar, read a news story or learn about a new reuse initiative please share it on the Google Group. To subscribe, send an email to:

[reducereusenetwork-ma-subscribe@googlegroups.com](mailto:reducereusenetwork-ma-subscribe@googlegroups.com)

## Next Meeting:

Brooke proposed quarterly meetings of full work group and suggested inviting a guest speaker to present on an innovative reuse program at these meetings. A live poll on interest in this idea showed 97% like this idea.

Sub-Working Groups will meet in-between the quarterly meetings and will report out at the full meetings.

Date of next meeting: TBD

Location: virtual

Suggestions for guest speakers are welcome; please email Brooke at [brooke.nash@mass.gov](mailto:brooke.nash@mass.gov) or

Kathi Mirza at [kathi.mirza@mass.gov](mailto:kathi.mirza@mass.gov)

## Wrap up/Adjourn:

**Remembering Debra Stark:** Brooke closed the meeting with remembrance of Debra Stark of [Debra’s Natural Gourmet](#), a tremendous reuse advocate and a recent recipient of a MassDEP Micro-grant. Debra crusaded tirelessly to obtain a variance from the Concord Board of Health to allow customers to bring their own containers to her store for bulk and prepared foods. She was successful, thanks to hundreds of engaged Concord residents who joined Debra to advocate to the Concord Board of Health. More about Debra’s life is [here](#). She will be greatly missed.

## Resources shared in the Chat:

- [Reducing-Waste-from-Restaurant-Takeout-and-Delivery-Meals.pdf \(recyclingworksma.com\)](#)
- Deconstruction case study: [Construction Materials - RecyclingWorks Massachusetts](#)
- Furniture and Office Equipment Reuse Guidance: [Business and Institutional Furniture and Office Equipment Reuse Guidance - RecyclingWorks Massachusetts](#) and here: [Reuse & Recycling of School Furniture, Fixtures & Equipment | Mass.gov](#)

