

## Beyond Waste IWG Overview – The Next 50%

Through the waste reduction and recycling efforts of the last 20 years, Washington is now diverting about 48% of the solid waste generated in the state to reuse, recycling and beneficial use applications. Though we don't know exactly how much greenhouse gas reductions this represents it is several million metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalents (MMTCO<sub>2</sub>E) per year. We believe that pursuing the recommended strategies to recycle “the next 50%” will result in at least a measurable 6 MMTCO<sub>2</sub>E per year more being reduced.

The charge given to the Beyond Waste Implementation Working Group was to recommend ways to significantly expand source reduction, reuse, recycling and composting and build on what is best and most successful in current waste management system by developing an implementation plan targeting products with the largest GHG reduction potential.

Through the IWG deliberations, the following materials were targeted as have significant greenhouse gas reduction potential:

- Paper (2.7 MMTCO<sub>2</sub>E potentially available)
- Organics (.8 MMTCO<sub>2</sub>E potentially available from food waste alone)
- Metals (At least 1.3 MMTCO<sub>2</sub>E potentially available)
- Construction and Demolition Waste (1 MMTCO<sub>2</sub>E in carpet alone)
- Plastics (.1MMTCO<sub>2</sub>E from plastic bottles alone)
- Contaminants (GHG reduction potential is not known, however, contaminants reduce the recyclability of the targeted materials above).

In addition, there is the potential of .75MMTCO<sub>2</sub>E to be realized through anaerobic digestion of dairy wastes. This potential becomes greater with the addition of other organic farm and food processing wastes.

It is important to remember that the solid waste management system is part of larger systems. Materials are extracted, turned into products, used and then disposed. The solid waste management system has traditionally focused only on the last point in the system – disposal. Recycling has been demonstrated to be an effective strategy to reduce the impacts of disposal. It is now recognized as being an effective tool to reduce the upstream impacts of extraction, product and use as well. The action recommendations keep these farther reaching benefits in mind.

The climate change action agenda demands a shift in our economy. The traditional “dig and dump” economy relies heavily on resource extraction and waste disposal. The new “sustainable” economy will rely on resource conservation and materials reutilization. A robust recycling system is key to making this new economic system work.

Our recommendations focus on optimizing the collection system for recyclable materials, creating a product stewardship program and providing incentives for organic materials use. We also recommend that future work focus on environmentally responsible purchasing by state and local governments, stimulating recycled material use by the manufacturing industry and working collaboratively with the retail industry to encourage waste reduction and recycling.