

WA Commingled Improvements Project: Southwest Region Workgroup

April 6, 2010

Key Issues & Recommendations

The total list of key issues discussed at the February meeting was voted on by each workgroup member present at the April meeting. Each member was given 3 red dots and 3 green dots and asked to put the red dots on the issues most critical in order to improve the commingled system, and then use the green dots to indicate the next important issues to focus on. The votes were tallied and the following are the top five priority issues (red) and the secondary four key issues (green).

Top Priority Key Issues

- 1. Consumer awareness/level of responsibility – Their reasonable expectation that if it goes in the cart, it's recycled**
- 2. Glass – Dealing with it as a contaminate and that very little is going back to glass**
- 3. Plastic film is a huge processing issue and the result is very dirty ('MRF film')**
- 4. MRF safety (sharps and explosives)**
- 5. The power of aligning our programs and messages across the region**

Secondary Key Issues

- 1. Lack of product stewardship/producer responsibility for materials**
- 2. How much can you separate and sort – How much do you include in the single-cart system? [Related secondary key issues: Too many plastic options; Export market pushback on quality]**
- 3. State and federal goals are driving diversion goals**
- 4. Rates need to cover the cost of what the program accepts and processes [Related secondary key issue: Educate ratepayers and electeds on system issues]**

Brainstormed List of Recommendations Based on Priority Issues

- 1. Consumer awareness/level of responsibility – Their reasonable expectation that if it goes in the cart, it's recycled.**
 - Redevelop feedback loop to the customer*
 - Educate that not everything is recyclable curbside or in the commingled cart*
 - The cart is not for everything*
 - Establish feedback loops throughout the system*

WA Commingled Improvements Project: Southwest Region Workgroup

April 6, 2010

2. Glass – Dealing with it as a contaminate and that very little is going back to glass

- *Keep it separate from other recyclables*
- *Glass depots*
- *Bottle Bill/Product Stewardship*
- *Market development*
- *MRF technology*
- *Increase recycled content (manufacturers drive demand)*

3. Plastic film is a huge processing issue and the result is very dirty ('MRF film')

- *Keep it off the curb*
- *Take-back center promotion (grocery stores, retail, drop-off sites)*
- *Eliminate plastic bags*
- *Use biodegradable bags*
- *MRF technology*
- *Legislative/Product Stewardship*

4. MRF safety (sharps and explosives)

- *Utilize robots*
- *Product Stewardship/Take-back for sharps and ammo*
- *Education of public*
- *Shell deposit system*
- *MRF technology for employee protection*

5. The power of aligning our programs and messages across the region

- *Combine Western county/city programs for those that share media sheds*
- *Combine education resources for clarity and consistency*
- *Convene municipal governments and haulers across regions to establish program standards (Ecology with WSRA, WRRRA act as conveners)[Factors include access to funding sources, economies of scale, city/county, different funding mechanisms (tipping fees, etc.)]*
- *Ecology's NW region convenes to address the issues the SW Region has worked on (i.e. improving the commingled recycling system)*
- *Empower our own local jurisdictions to affect change*

WA Commingled Improvements Project: Southwest Region Workgroup

April 6, 2010

- 1. Lack of product stewardship/producer responsibility for materials**
 - *Promote cradle-to-cradle*
 - *Support Northwest Product Stewardship Council (local) and Product Stewardship Institute (national)*
 - *Vote on proposals from NWPSC/PSI or educate those who do vote*
 - *Become a member of NWPSC/PSI and participate*
 - *Educate local policy makers on the problems these materials have in the commingled stream and advocate for solutions and financing*
 - *Work with product manufacturers on what they design*
- 2. How much can you separate and sort – How much do you include in the single-cart system? [Related secondary key issues: Too many plastic options; Export market pushback on quality]**
 - *Align programs first – MRF technology can follow once they know they will have a consistent incoming stream*
 - *Keep it simple*
 - *Choose materials that have benefit – stop when diminishing returns occur*
 - *Choose materials based on those that get recycled*
 - *Align MRFs to have the same technology*
 - *Program loads from different jurisdictions get mixed together at MRF already – align programs*
- 3. State and federal goals are driving local diversion goals**
 - *Change from tons collected to the impact of GHG reductions*
 - *Switch focus from collection to recovery*
 - *Diversion needs to address product design for recyclability – Legislate for recyclability*
 - *Consistency in measuring – local, state, federal*
 - *Choose realistic goals – not just picking a number (i.e. 50% recycling rate)*
 - *Waste reduction isn't allowed for or given its due – Can't measure it; competes with recycling goals*
- 4. Rates need to cover the cost of what the program accepts and processes [Related secondary key issue: Educate ratepayers and electeds on system issues]**
 - *Recycling isn't free – Change our message*
 - *Can't just raise tipping fees—Leads to non-program materials in cart*
 - *Educate residents on what they are paying for – don't embed rates, show contamination costs, collection costs, processing costs*
 - *Find MRF technology to get the results you want (end-users)*
 - *State garbage tax*
 - *Share collection cost savings throughout the whole system (to MRF and end-user)*
 - *Eliminate the commodity credit*