

# Meeting Notes

Recycling Stakeholders

May 2, 2018

---

Please send corrections, edits, or additions to [alli.kingfisher@ecy.wa.gov](mailto:alli.kingfisher@ecy.wa.gov)

---

## Meeting Objectives

- To share information about the impacts of National Sword on stakeholders across Washington
- Share next steps that groups are taking

## General Notes from the Discussion

- **Sign up for the [ListServ](#)** to continue to receive information about future meetings and work.
- **Access meeting notes and presentations [here](#).**
- Alli shared a summary of the comments from the survey.
- Ecology is committed to listening and facilitating stakeholder dialogue on recent changes to recycling due to the National Sword/Blue Sky issues.
- Seadrunar Recycling reported that they seeing growth. They are not single stream and handle only commercial materials, not residential recycling. They put out premium grades and meet China's 0.5% contamination threshold.
- Pend Oreille County reported they source separate at the transfer stations and only collect what they have markets for. They do not currently collect plastic or glass.
- An emerging issue is the availability of shipping containers as these containers now need to travel greater distances and for longer periods of time. It compounds the other issues and challenges.
- In the past year, paper has dropped from \$100/ton to \$5/ton to having to pay to get rid of it. Before the ban, China took 85% of the paper and there is no other similar-sized outlet for that material. In the past, paper revenues subsidized the recycling of other materials.

- Recycling has never been free, and people are having to pay more for it now on both the commercial and residential side as contracts are renegotiated and surcharges are implemented. The market is starting to react.
- We need to attract new pieces of the recycling supply chain to our state. However paper mills are million dollar investments. A large number of mills have closed in the past decade. Siting mills in Washington is challenging due to factors such as environmental regulations, high cost of living, and average wages. Need to consider what is best suited to bring to WA regarding recycling markets.
- A few folks have heard of Chinese companies who are looking to site facilities in the United States that will pre-process materials for import into China.
- Transportation costs vary. It is cheaper to ship from Tacoma to China than Tacoma to Longview, due to subsidization inherent in the empty containers and backhauling. Extremely high transportation costs.
- Embedding recycling costs in commercial garbage rates, as many cities do, is problematic. Recycling isn't free... but when city contracts embed the recycling costs, the company collecting the trash (and collecting the embedded fee) has an unfair advantage in the open market of commercial recycling.
- In the competitive marketplace haulers are under pressure to take as many materials as possible even when there are not outlets for the material or the material quality is contaminated. Most recyclers in US can't take it, so that's why it's been sent elsewhere.
- UTC system requires line item for each service, which has to stand on its own.
- Jefferson County reported they have been source separating and have strived to find local markets: paper goes to a facility in Seattle, glass to Strategic Materials in Seattle, and OCC to a local mill. The community wants to put pressure on manufacturers to reduce single-use plastics that are ubiquitous, and also would like to see a bottle bill.
- There is an emerging issue related to needing to color separate brown and white paper. Brown paper is considered an outthrow under the China policy and other countries are also starting to include brown paper as an outthrow. Brown paper bags are not allowed in an office mix paper bale.
- There needs to be increased focus on reuse. Reusable bags and containers should be a key focus to replace single use plastic containers and bags.
- Some items such as Starbuck cups are a point of confusion to consumers. Starbucks says they are recyclable and the City of Seattle's includes them on the acceptable item information. However 90% of the cups are food contaminated. Even if it was rinsed and clean, it will still appear in a bale as if it was

- contaminated. At a company creating high grade papers only, they have been hiding them or landfilling them for a long time because they are NOT acceptable in their grades. Need to get back to telling people about the truth about the items on the posters.
- Switching to a focus on compostable items instead of recyclability has the potential for many unintended consequences and is not necessarily a good environmental 'fix'. Compostable cups can cause contamination issues in compost as well.
  - Permitted facilities are seeking more guidance on how to store materials outside. They are waiting for WAC 173-350 to be adopted.
  - Some MRFs are adding additional equipment and robotics to improve the quality of their bales of materials.
  - The evolution of packaging is challenging. From light-weighting (a ton of bottles has increased from 40,000 bottles to 90,000 bottles) to changes in the materials used. We need to involve packaging manufacturers.
  - Communication ideas included: "Recycling is not free"
  - Put emphasis on recycling the few items the market demands.
  - We need to increase focus on providing the "right level of service." When the trash cans are too small then garbage overflows into recycling cans. This is a problem with both single family and multi-family recycling.
  - Need a focus on keeping dumpster and cart lids closed. Water is a contaminate that degrades the quality of materials.
  - There is a need to revisit the legislation in 2005 that talked about source separation and properly sized containers.
  - Cart-tagging was brought up as a strategy to reduce contamination. Drivers no longer see the loads, due to automated arms. This is the case for both residential and commercial collection. City of Atlanta sent out staff ahead of the collection truck to assess cart contents and tag. Oops tags for commercial customers who can switch collectors can lead to loss of customers.

## Actions and Next Steps

- Washington State Association of Counties (WSAC) subgroup of solid waste managers met in April. They have formed a task force to come up with a coordinated standard list of materials and best management practices. They are also working on a unified message around Blue Sky across the state.

- In King Co, the Solid Waste Department is convening a responsible recycling task force, which is a subset of the Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC) and the Metropolitan Solid Waste Management Advisory Committee (MSWMAC). The group is comprised of local governments and haulers. They are planning one meeting a month thru Oct. and will focus on every aspect of the recycling system, such as education (to be farmed out for immediate action) then medium and long term items. They hope to coordinate with others doing similar work at the state and regional (OR) levels.

In terms of messaging, King County will look closely at the messaging from the Commingled group. Should segue nicely into Blue Sky work. Also will look at what WSAC managers come up with and hopefully we'll all be saying the same thing.

- Ecology will continue organizing the Commingled Education and Messaging meeting to develop best management practices and outreach materials.
- Ecology will continue to organize monthly meetings to facilitate information sharing between interested stakeholders.
- Next Meetings:
  - Wednesday June 6: 1:00-3:00 p.m.
  - July 19: 1:00-3:00 p.m.
  - August 15: 1:00-3:00 p.m.