

Washington State Department of Ecology, Recycling Steering Committee (RSC)

Meeting Summary

Date: October 10, 2018

Time: 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Location: Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department, 3629 S. D St., Tacoma, WA 98418

Welcome & Introductions

Laurie Davies, Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology), welcomed the group and provided opening remarks. She provided an overview of the Recycling Steering Committee's (RSC) formation and purpose and introduced the facilitator Annie Kilburg, Triangle Associates (Triangle). Triangle asked the group for a round of introductions, reviewed the ground rules, and walked attendees through the proposed agenda and meeting materials.

Convening Interview Summary

Triangle stated that it conducted convening interviews prior to this meeting with most of the RSC members. Triangle presented a high-level verbal summary of the major interview themes, stating that the following points came through most clearly during most of the interviews:

- This process is an opportunity to **reset the recycling perspective** in the state, regionally, and nationally: how can we develop a sustainable, well-funded, environmentally and socially responsible recycling system?
- There is significant support to develop a **short-, medium-, and long-term vision** with actions on how to get there.
- **Additional research is not needed**; focus on actions.
- There is a **need for direction from the Department of Ecology** on their expectations for this process, the legislative agenda, investment in moving the outcomes of this process forward, and any existing sideboards that the RSC should know about.
- Consider including the **Governor's office** in this conversation.
- **Recycling value sets** are being jeopardized.
- There are significantly different views on **balancing the costs and benefits of recycling** versus sending materials to landfills.
- There are huge impacts to consider if **no action** is taken to resolve this crisis.
- **Packaging** is a huge contribution to the issue; as soon as the industry catches up, packaging changes.
- **Incentivize collaboration** and developing creative solutions; avoid punitive approaches.
- There is concern about timing; **the RSC meetings will be conducted during the legislative session**.

Laurie provided responses to some of the above convening themes as follows:

- Overall the Washington State Department of Ecology hopes to gain feedback through this process and is encouraging the RSC members to reach consensus on policy messaging.
- Officially there is no formal directive guiding the RSC; however, recycling is becoming an increasingly important issue in the Washington State Legislature.
- Interest in recycling solutions has been exhibited by both the Legislature and the Governor's office. The Governor's office asked for the development of an agency request legislation to address the recycling market issue.

Laurie also stated that Ecology has two budget requests pertinent to recycling including: (1) restoring full funding of litter tax to assist with recycling issues; and (2) full funding for Local Solid Waste Financial Assistance (LSFA) grants for local governments.

The RSC members made comments, asked questions, and Ecology and members responded as follows.

- Q1: Many of the RSC members inquired regarding the potential legislation Ecology will be pursuing in 2019.
 - A: The solid waste and the recycling crisis have been topics of interest.
- Q2: How will the work of the Recycling Steering Committee (RSC) connect to and overlap with the work of parallel groups in Washington, and in other states like Oregon?
 - A: Ecology is collaborating with Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (ODEQ), CalRecycle, SWANA, Solid Waste Advisory Committees (SWACs), as well as reaching out to health directors and the Association of Washington Counties (AWC).
 - Ecology, ODEQ, CalRecycle and U.S. E.P.A. have monthly update calls on activities related to the recycling crisis. The work of this group connects to the Oregon process. Ecology is participating in the Oregon process by being involved on their calls due to their shared borders, markets and companies. Concerning the solid waste advisory committee, Ecology is reaching out to health directors and planning affiliates of Association of WA Counties, and then staff that attend local county SWACs.
- Q3: What is the timeline for the release of potential draft legislation?
 - A: The timeline is based on the Washington State Governor's Office. A proposal has been submitted to the Office of Financial Management (OFM) and the Governor's Policy Office.
- Q4: There are two bills being targeted towards local governments. Is one of them related to funding from the Litter Tax Bill? If so, why were the percentages in the budget allocations changed?
 - A: The funding allocation from the Litter Tax Bill has changed. Originally the funding was allocated in three ways: 30% Ecology Programs; 20% Education and outreach going toward funding local government grants; 50% for litter prevention and pickup. The funding has changed to be 30% for Ecology Programs; 20% for Education and outreach; 40% for litter prevention; and the addition of 10% for new recycling programs.
- Q5: How is the Department of Commerce being involved and communicated with around this steering committee and recycling?
 - A: The Washington State Department of Commerce is engaged on a business technical and clean energy interests. There is an opportunity to develop funding mechanisms to companies and processors to build facilities along the west coast and Washington.

Share Aspirations for Process:

Triangle asked each member of the RSC to share one-to-two minutes responding to the following questions:

- What are your interests in this process?
- What does success look like?

Alli Kingfisher, Washington State Department of Ecology stated the following interests and examples of success:

- Interests in the process include bringing people together who are vital in the industry and the state to hear what can be done in the recycling industry, strengthen relationships, and develop potential policy and legislative actions.
- Success looks like agreement on the future of recycling and where mutual support can be built.

Esther Beaumier, Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department, stated the following interests and examples of success:

- Interests in the process include the regulation of businesses, potential public health impacts, and offering support.
- Success looks like creating change, having conversations, and convening the RSC as the first step of the process

Ann LaRue, the Utilities and Transportation Commission, stated the following interests and examples of success:

- Interests in the process include being a resource for the entire RSC.
- Success looks like getting to a point when WA State has non-contaminated recycling.

Kevin Kelly, Recology, stated the following interests and examples of success:

- Interests include a market that is healthy and supports the communities being served.
- Success looks like legislation that is supportive of and helpful for the long-term viability of recycling and considers factors such as social impacts, environmental, and economic impacts of recycling.

Andy Hackman, Ameripen, stated the following interests and examples of success:

- Interests include providing a support role to the recycling system, continue collaboration, and improve the recycling system.
- Success looks like supporting markets, creating policy changes, and collaborating to create markets or support market development.

Jan Gee, Washington Food Industry Association, stated the following interests and examples of success:

- Interests include representing independent grocers and convenient stores in this state. Long-term interest in recycling and waste reduction. The goal is to understand the perspectives of everybody at the table to create a balance of public policy going forward.
- Success looks like this group working hand-in-hand with short-term and long-term goals and policies and be able to go to the legislature and speak with a voice of unity.

Dave Claugus, Pioneer Recycling, stated the following interests and examples of success:

- Interests include looking at how this committee can facilitate new projects and new mills in the Pacific NW, and improve pricing along the entire West Coast.
- Success looks like helping to educate the public that recycling is not broken, there is a need to find new places for all these materials. Recycling is still finding a new home for everything and the price of those materials has changed.

Steve Wulf, Sunshine Disposal, stated the following interests and examples of success:

- Interests include bringing something of substance back to communities being served to engender a degree of hope. Recycling rates are growing, and growing past the rates of regular disposal.
- Success would look like the ability to explain clearly to the public and to legislative bodies the impact of recycling, to have legislative action come from the work of this committee, and be able to show progress is being made in recycling.

Heather Trim, Zero Waste Washington, stated the following interests and examples of success:

- Interests include a solid vision that includes waste prevention, and allows for public trust to not be broken.
- Success looks like actual goals and recommendations to support legislation (plastic bag ban; Ecology legislation; etc.) break down silos in the industry, and support legislation ahead of the next legislative session.

Lisa Sepanski, King County, stated the following interests and examples of success:

- Interests include coming to agreement on the problem and the areas can be influenced to create change in the Washington recycling system.
- Success looks like thinking outside the box and working together to take a fresh look at the recycling process and create a more well-funded system in the state and nationally.

Brad Lovaas, Washington Refuse and Recycling Association stated the following interests and examples of success:

- Interests include the need for a more dynamic system, whether it be the pricing mechanisms, need more flexibility.
- Success looks like the ability to communicate the story of recycling up and down the process to the public and industry members in recycling.

Travis Dutton, Clark County stated the following interests and examples of success:

- Interests include potential impacts to Clark County and other counties.
- Success looks like examining the causes, creating a system to mitigate what is possible, and building a system that is more agile.

Matt Stern, Waste Management, stated the following interests and examples of success:

- Interests include to provide as much technical assistance as possible throughout the process.
- Success looks like a greater recognition of the need for the industry to reset, better alignment of collection; processing; and markets, and building a solid foundation now that will last into the future.

Rory Wintersteen, Lincoln County, stated the following interests and examples of success:

- Interests include being involved in the process, working towards solutions, and the ability to communicate progress to rural counties.
- Success looks like, agreement that there is not one solution, raising awareness of elected officials at the local and state level, and developing a unified outreach message that recycling is not broken to the public.

Shannon McClelland, Association of Washington Cities, stated the following interests and examples of success:

- Interests include moving cities forward and improving the management of recyclables.
- Success looks like a system focused on manufacturer ready material, incentivizes quality by manufacturer and customer, and one that is financially feasible for municipalities.

Anne Piacentino, Washington State Recycling Association stated the following interests and examples of success:

- Interests include, representing membership on a state-wide level.
- Success looks like having transparent conversations, taking actionable steps, and delivering on shelf ready solutions.

Nina Goodrich, Sustainable Packaging Coalition, stated the following interests and examples of success:

- Interests include, reinventing the process so Washington State is ready for recycling changes in the future.
- Success looks like a process that can be modeled for other areas and replicated by other states.

Mark Storey, Whitman County stated the following interests and examples of success:

- Interests include, incentivizing private concerns through assistance of local agencies, and creating a process that does not leave rural counties and areas behind.
- Success looks like having measurable actions, continuing to improve the reduction of the waste stream, write policies that improve domestic use and recycling

Participate in Facilitated Visioning Exercise

Triangle led the RSC members through a visioning exercise to consider what the group wanted to achieve by June 2019. Attendees were asked to stay aspirational and sit quietly or discuss with others and write down on separate sticky notes potential topics, issues, challenges, and information needs on the timeline for where the recycling system is at now and where the RSC wants to make changes. Some additional questions to consider included:

- What should recycling look like in the State of Washington?
- What are the short, medium, and long-term objectives, strategies, or actions needed to get there?

Following the visioning exercise, the group stated that there was a need to define short, medium, and long-term timeframes as a starting point to move the topics identified forward and agreed to timeframes as follows:

- Short-term: zero-to-six months
- Medium-term: six months-to-two years
- Long-term: Two years and beyond (+)

Work to Refine Rough Draft Charter Example

Triangle introduced the rough draft Charter example. The RSC members reviewed the problem statement section of the draft charter and the following comments were shared:

- A few members stated that the problem statement needs additional revisions to align with the perspectives of all the RSC members.
- Some members said that the problem statement should avoid focusing on symptoms as the issues are a result challenges that have taken place over many years.
- Other members stated that the statement should stray from what has caused the issues, the RSC needs to look forward to see what is possible and focus on solutions.

- Another member said that they think developing goals and parameters about what the system will look like in the future could be helpful.
- One participant suggested asking members “why do we recycle?” This question could elicit some feedback to help identify a problem statement that resonates for all members.
- There was a suggestion to identify the issues within the product and process sides of recycling.
- One member stated that policy and economics need to be included in describing the issues.
- Other members shared some of the symptoms of the current recycling system including:
 - Outdated equipment;
 - Lack of messaging and outreach to producers and consumers;
 - Nonexistent markets;
 - Increasing prices to recycle;
 - Outdated laws & policies;
 - Contamination, market vulnerability.

Summary and Next Steps

Triangle proposed to take information shared during the visioning exercise and distill it for review by a subgroup of RSC members.

- **Action Item:** Dave Claugus, Alli Kingfisher, Travis Dutton, Brad Lovaas, Lisa Sepanski, and Jan Gee volunteered to be a part of the visioning subgroup. The objective of this subgroup might include a proposal or recommendations for next steps at the November meeting.
- **Action Item:** Ecology agreed to distribute an email with the visioning information and a request for participation in the subgroup with a Doodle Poll for a meeting.
- **Action Item:** Ecology agreed to convene a webinar to further refine the rough draft Charter document prior to the November 28 meeting.

Triangle stated that the next meeting would be held on Wednesday November 28th from 10:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. at the Washington State Department of Commerce office. Triangle thanked the RSC for their thoughtful input and participation and adjourned the meeting at 1:00 p.m.