

WASHINGTON STATE RECYCLING DEVELOPMENT CENTER ADVISORY BOARD CHARTER

Background

For decades, Washington State has relied on China to recycle the majority of the paper and plastic waste generated by residents and businesses. Over the years, China has implemented ongoing policies that have threatened the systemic viability and resiliency of Washington State recycling programs. In 2008, recycling markets were severely impacted by the closure of paper mills in preparation for the Olympic games. In 2013, China implemented the “Operation Green Fence” enforcement program to police contamination. In 2018, China implemented the “National Sword” policy that banned the import of certain plastic and paper materials and set a stringent contaminant limit for recyclables (0.5 percent by weight). Shortly thereafter, imports of mixed paper were banned and import quotas were drastically reduced. In 2020, China announced a complete ban on all imported scrap material in 2021. These changes have disrupted global recycling systems, including Washington’s, by eliminating the largest market for these materials. Recently, other international markets, such as Malaysia, Indonesia and Vietnam, have followed with similar bans or strict contamination limits.

Alternative export and domestic markets for mixed paper and mixed plastics are extremely limited. With limited markets, costs to collect and process have increased to improve quality and reduce contamination. In response, communities across Washington are removing items from programs, suspending entire programs, and/or paying increased fees to recycle. In response to these systemic challenges, Washington needs to redesign the recycling framework to preserve and improve the environmental and social benefits of sustainable recycling. Redesigning the recycling framework will include the research, study, and recommendation of effective recycling policies that will establish and/or improve domestic markets, improve the recyclability of materials, reduce contamination of collected and processed materials, and strengthen the processing infrastructure required to support sustainable recycling.

Recycling Development Center

In 2019, state law¹ established the Recycling Development Center (Center) within Washington State’s Department of Ecology to help address the loss of overseas recycling markets. The Center’s purpose is to further the development of domestic processing and markets for recyclable materials. The Center’s activities are guided by this advisory board, the Goals and Metrics document, and the annual work plan.

Ecology, Commerce, and UTC responsibilities

Ecology is responsible for the work of the Center in partnership with material recovery facility operators, public and private sector recycling and solid waste industries, packaging manufacturers and retailers, local governments, environmental organizations, interested colleges and universities, and state agencies.

The Washington Department of Commerce (Commerce) supports the Center by providing business, marketing, and technical assistance to the public and private sector.

¹ Chapter 70.370 Revised Code of Washington, <https://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=70.370&full=true>

Center Advisory Board Charter

The Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (UTC) will attend board meetings, track Center activities, and provide input related to impacts on ratepayers. The UTC representative is a non-voting member of the advisory board.

Board responsibilities

The Board will advise the Center during the development of the annual work plan, provide assessment, review and feedback on projects, studies, tasks and policies being considered. Additional board activities and responsibilities may include:

- Establish subcommittees as needed to delve deeper into specific issues. To study specific problems or projects and make recommendations for action.
- Review, advise, and comment on Center work plan, draft output, plans and reports, recommendations and implementation plans.
- Evaluate, analyze, and make recommendations on state policies that may affect markets for recyclable materials.
- Interpret the responsibilities assigned to the Center in the law.
- Prepare the goals and metrics for Center work.
- Provide information, resources, and recommendations to the Center.

Board decision making

The Board's advice to Ecology does not require members to reach consensus. All viewpoints will be considered as the work plan for the Center is developed and the results of that work is completed. Recommended actions, along with any areas of disagreement, will be presented in any reports and shared with appropriate stakeholders for further implementation.

Board Participation

All board members commit to:

- Participate in each meeting to the best of their abilities to ensure continuity through the process. Avoid substituting or alternating members whenever possible.
- Come prepared for meetings by reading materials before the meeting, thinking through questions, and developing responses and discussion ideas.
- Engage in honest, open-minded, constructive, and good-faith discussions to seek understanding and optimal decisions and outcomes.
- Treat everyone and their opinions with respect.
- Comment constructively and specifically.
- Consult with their constituencies and provide input to the discussions from their perspectives.
- Do not attempt to represent the views of the Center to the public or media, unless clearly agreed upon and delegated to do so.

Board membership

The Board is comprised of 14 members appointed by the Director of Ecology in consultation with the Director of Commerce. The two county representatives were appointed by the Washington State Association of Counties. Board representation as of March 2020:

Government – 2 year terms

- Seattle - Seago Jackson, Seattle Public Utilities, Seattle

Center Advisory Board Charter

- Skagit County - Margo Gillaspay, Skagit County Public Works Department, Mt Vernon
- Spokane County - Deb Geiger, Spokane County Solid Waste, Spokane

Research institution – 2 year terms

- Pacific Northwest National Laboratory - Corinne Drennan, Richland
- Washington State University - Dr. Karl Englund, Pullman: board cochair
- Evergreen State College - Scott Morgan, Olympia: board chair

Public interest group – 2 year terms

- Zero Waste Washington - Heather Trim, Seattle

Private sector recycling materials system – 2 or 3 year terms

- American Chemistry Council – Tim Shestek, Sacramento, CA – 2 years
- Ameripen - Kyla Fisher, Phoenix, AZ – 2 years
- North Pacific Paper Company - Jay Simmons, Longview – 3 years
- Recology - Derek Ruckman, Seattle – 2 years
- Returnit - Allen Langdon, Encorp Pacific, Burnaby, BC – 2 years
- Sustainable Packaging Coalition - Nina Goodrich, Olympia – 3 years
- Waste Management – Mike Range, Tacoma – 3 years

The chair and cochair of the advisory board, Scott Morgan, chair and Karl Englund, cochair, were elected from among the members by a simple majority vote. Additional temporary appointments may be made by the chair of the Board, with agreement among the members, where specific expertise is needed. Board members may substitute an alternate to attend meetings on their behalf.

Meeting schedule

The Board initially met January 2020. The board will meet quarterly or more frequently as needed. Meeting dates are posted on the board website and shared with interested parties by email.

https://www.ezview.wa.gov/site/alias_1962/37596/recycling_development_center_advisory_board.aspx

Ecology will host and facilitate board meetings, handle meeting logistics, and finalize the meeting schedule in consultation with with the board chair and cochair. All board meetings will be offered with a call-in or webinar option for interested parties. Board meetings, discussions, and deliberations will occur in compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act.

Record Keeping

Board records, such as documents, discussion drafts, and meeting summaries are public will be posted on the board website for interested parties to review. Ecology will post meeting notes and keep the board website updated:

https://www.ezview.wa.gov/site/alias_1962/37596/recycling_development_center_advisory_board.aspx

Alternative format

To request reasonable accommodation, including materials in a format for the visually impaired or in a language other than English, call Ecology at 360-407-7285. Persons with impaired hearing may call Washington Relay Service at 711. Persons with speech disability may call TTY at 877-833-6341. Or visit Ecology's Accessibility Webpage: <https://ecology.wa.gov/About-us/Accountability-transparency/Accessibility/Request-for-reasonable-accommodation>