

Roadmap to develop the Vermont Waste Prevention Strategic Plan 6/11/2007

Draft Mission statement: Vermont will establish itself as a national leader in waste prevention resulting in:

- Reductions in waste generation levels, energy use, greenhouse gas emissions and toxicity of the waste stream
- Conservation of valuable natural resources
- Extension of the lives of Vermont's landfills
- Enhancement of the quality of life in Vermont
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Strategic Plan: To accomplish this mission, the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation and stakeholders from the private, public and NGO sectors will develop and implement a *Vermont Waste Prevention Strategic Plan*. The Plan will include:

- 20-year vision of Vermont's material and waste flows.
- 5-year set of strategies and actions to reduce waste generation.
- Definition of stakeholder and State Government roles in waste prevention.
- Methods to measure progress in per capita waste prevention.

Essential elements for success:

- Stakeholder support, engagement, and willingness to take action.
- Maintenance or enhancement of economic vitality.
- Increased understanding among the general public of waste generation and its consequences, as well as the opportunities and benefits of reducing generation.
- Partnerships within and among State Government, the private sector, the public sector, and NGO's.
- Coordination with related efforts, such as the Governor's Commission on Climate Change, and stakeholder waste prevention programs at a local, state, regional, and national level.

Implementation: The Waste Prevention Strategic Plan, when completed, will form the basis for a new Waste Prevention Section of the State of Vermont Solid Waste Management Plan

Draft Roadmap for Development of the Waste Prevention Strategic Plan: Development of the Waste Prevention Strategy has a number of broad components. Discrete tasks comprise each component. The components and a rough estimate of their schedule are:

<i>Task</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Completion date</i>
1. Project initiation	Convening DEC project team, contracting professional facilitator, initial planning.	Completed (11/06 – 12/06)
2. Public Forum	Hosting 20-person public forum.	Completed (1/07 – 4/07)
3. Steering Committee	Create and convene stakeholder steering committee; develop draft project roadmap; hold initial steering committee meeting to establish project direction and roadmap details.	6/07
4. Workgroups	Create topic-based stakeholder workgroups to develop specific strategies and action plans.	7/07
5. Draft WP Plan	Steering committee and workgroups develop draft Waste Prevention Plan.	11/07
6. Public/stakeholder comment	Draft Waste Prevention Plan is distributed to broad stakeholder community for comments.	11/07
7. Ratification and adoption	Steering Committee finalizes and ratifies final plan	12/07
8. Implementation		2008

Who are the stakeholders?

In the broad sense it is everyone - that is all Vermonters including individuals, businesses, trade organizations, advocacy groups, institutions, solid waste districts, and state and local government. We are all “stakeholders” in that we either generate waste and/or are involved with materials (that ultimately must be thrown out) that could have been prevented from being manufactured or produced in the first place.

In terms of the planning process, it is those stakeholders who are willing to bring their expertise, experiences, and willingness to work with the other stakeholders and DEC to develop a state-wide waste prevention strategy.

Purpose of Stakeholder Planning Process

The very first “critical issue and action step” of the State Solid Waste Plan is to reduce waste through waste prevention. In fact, the Plan sets forth waste prevention as the highest priority for solid waste management in Vermont, and we acknowledge that this emphasis has not been made in the past. If we as a state and nation are to reduce both the quantity and toxicity of the solid waste stream, and consequently reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, we will need to use resources more effectively.

Detailed description of Tasks

This component consists of several discrete tasks that are intended to inform Strategy development and also provide an opportunity to educate stakeholders regarding Strategy options. The Steering Committee will be involved in scoping and then reviewing drafts of key work products prepared or distributed under this component. Most tasks can be conducted concurrently. Tasks include the following:

A. Evaluate **DEC and other State of Vermont efforts** with waste prevention and efforts to reduce waste generation. This task involves summarizing DEC's direct experience with waste prevention including the Business Environmental Partnership, review of Solid Waste Management Assistance Fund grants related to preventing waste, existing statutes, and the provision of technical assistance and general outreach. (Appendix B). Also to be evaluated is to review State Purchasing waste prevention related purchasing practices, any work that has been done in Vermont's higher education system, particularly the Vermont State Colleges, UVM, Middlebury Colleges and K-12.

Evaluate **local government efforts (in Vermont)** to prevent waste and reduce waste generation. (Local government projects funded by DEC solid waste grants will be profiled in task above.) Short interviews may be conducted with staff from a targeted and representative sample of local governments in order to determine their experience with and perceptions of waste prevention and reuse. Solid waste district initiatives may be profiled in order to determine "lessons learned", ideas for transferability, and possible next steps. Any interviews conducted will also attempt to assess local government capacity to implement waste prevention and reuse work now and in the future.

B. Evaluate **non-governmental efforts** in Vermont to prevent waste and increase reuse. This task will profile key non-governmental players in the waste prevention/reuse arena, including non-profit groups working directly in waste prevention education. Special projects (such as Edible Food Rescue Program, Association of Vermont Recyclers and Vermont Earth Institute education programs, 10 % Challenge) as well as targeted industries that provide reuse functions. A small number of reuse industries will be evaluated in order to profile key players, identify trends (whether the reuse activities are increasing, or decreasing, and why), and assess industry needs. Examples of industries that might be targeted include edible food rescue, reusable building material salvage, computer reuse, skilled repair (furniture, appliances), and traditional "thrift" operations. This task will also evaluate the "green building" movement for waste prevention/reuse opportunities.

C. Review report from OR of their "*Evaluation of waste prevention and reuse efforts outside of Oregon.*" Review the Community Based Social Marketing (CBSM) website, if not part of the OR review.

D. Evaluate **waste generation data** related to both products and materials. This task consists of several related activities intended to improve our understanding of trends and actual changes in waste generation. The activities include:

- Evaluate DEC waste composition and recovery rate data to determine which material categories have been responsible for rising waste generation.
- Review state of Oregon's research (literature review, Internet search, targeted interviews) to evaluate trends in and forward-looking projections of waste generation on a material- and product-specific basis, as well as possible causes for increasing waste generation (increasing house sizes, increasing disposable income, etc.).

L. Evaluate and provide recommendations for waste prevention as an **environmental strategy**. While all waste prevention (and reuse) activities will help to achieve statutory waste generation goals, certain activities are likely to have greater environmental benefits than others. Similarly, some waste prevention (and reuse) activities result in environmental trade-offs, decreasing impacts in one area while increasing them in another. This task will document existing literature on the environmental advantages (and disadvantages) of waste prevention and reuse and the benefits of waste prevention and reuse in the context of sustainability, in order to allow for more effective strategy development. This task will be done in coordination with the Governor's Commission on Climate Change.

M. Evaluate and provide recommendations for waste prevention and its relationship to **economic vitality in Vermont**. Waste prevention clearly saves money for businesses and households who practice it. Paradoxically then, waste prevention is sometimes criticized as being "bad for the economy". This task will answer the question: "under what circumstances does waste prevention (and reuse) enhance Vermont's economic vitality?" It will also explore the relationship between waste prevention/generation and broader issues regarding economic sustainability, including job creation.¹ The purpose of this task is to more effectively focus waste prevention (and reuse) activities to enhance economic vitality in Vermont, while also developing a reasonable response to the criticism that "waste prevention is bad for the economy". It should be noted that economic vitality in the context of this task includes a broader scope than just economic growth.

N. Evaluate the link between waste prevention, waste generation, and **product stewardship**. This task will research and explore the feasibility of product stewardship opportunities and policies that can contribute to better design for the environment and other approaches that will result in reduced waste generation. (i.e. PSI, regional organizations such as NERC and NEWMOA)

¹ American households now average a negative savings rate. At the national level, recent economic growth is increasingly funded by foreign borrowing. Both of these trends impact waste generation and neither are economically sustainable (footnote from OR report).