

**Minutes of the Waste Prevention Steering Committee
Recyclables Subcommittee
October 4, 2007**

Attendees:

Chair: Jim McCullough, Legislator from Williston

Members: Clare Innes, Chittenden Solid Waste District; Bob Blankenheim, VOCAL; Peter Crawford, Small Business Development Center; Paul Comey, Green Mountain Coffee Roasters; Renny Perry, City of Vergennes

DEC Staff Support: Dave DiDomenico; Julie Hackbarth

Purpose:

The purpose of this meeting was to discuss the details of each priority (determined in previous meetings) using the following list of questions:

- How much will this cost to implement?
- Is there a potential funding source?
- Is this doable?
- How can the results/successes be measured?
- Who will implement this idea?
- What expertise is needed to implement the idea?
- Is an infrastructure needed?
- Research needed?

Discussion

The group felt that the first task was to prioritize our list of priorities. In previous meetings we had identified priorities, but had not listed them in any particular order. This was done based on which of the priorities was most "doable".

The list of priorities in order:

1. Waste Prevention in schools
2. Providing recycling opportunities away from home
3. Landfill bans
4. Labeling
5. Require manufactures to be responsible for their packaging and products
6. Legislative Mandates

Using this revised list of priorities, the group used the questions above to discuss each priority in more detail. On the question of cost, the group decided that a range was the best we could determine at this point (i.e., low cost; moderate cost; high cost).

Details of each priority:

1. Waste Prevention in schools

How much will this cost to implement? Low to moderate. Cost would include increased funding for the Association of Vermont Recyclers (AVR) for educational programs in the schools. They are currently funded through the Solid Waste Fund (~\$20,000 /per year) and through other grants. Increased funding should be earmarked for implementation of recycling programs, composting programs and waste prevention programs in schools.

Is there a potential funding source? School budget, the community would have to fund the initiative up front. State education funding may be possible. If the program is successful, savings from reduced costs of disposal for each school may off set the cost of the program. We discussed the potential of a "recycle bank" to offset cost to the schools. The recycle bank is used in Philadelphia; it provides credits or store discounts to those that participate in a program.

Is this doable? Yes.

How can the results/successes be measured? One potential measure of success is lower disposal costs for the school. If the school lowers the disposal cost and is paid for the recycled material, the program could become self sustaining.

Who will implement this idea? AVR, ANR, solid waste districts, teachers.

What expertise is needed to implement the idea? May need outside consulting to help start the program or to sell the program to schools.

Is an infrastructure needed? No.

Research needed? Research existing programs in VT, could pattern after DARE program or fire prevention program. Environmental curricula and infrastructure could become part of the school accreditation process (potential legislation).

Other ideas:

- Set up a database of schools and teachers that have started successful recycling, composting or waste prevention programs in schools.
- Invite teachers and students to present successful programs at science on the green.
- Produce a manual identifying ways these programs can be set up and how they work for various sizes of schools and varying funding.
- The goal would be to institutionalize the program so is not on shoulders of one teacher.

- Tap into the pool of expertise in communities that can take a concept to school board and work with students; utilize existing talent, such as “master composters”, retirees... set up a program of “master recyclers”.

2. Provide recycling opportunities away from home

This can include special events such as county fairs or places people gather such as businesses, airports, and events, or could include villages, towns or cities.

Like energy star, offer tool kit, business buys only energy star, give people recognition for doing it, business has symbol, events can certify with solid waste districts - district could work with event and evaluate at end of event and improve next time, even in mandated areas businesses don't offer.

How much will this cost to implement? Low to moderate.

Is there a potential funding source?

Is this doable? Yes.

How can the results/successes be measured? Similar to number one above, if the program is successful, it should result in savings for the event/business and could become self sustainable.

Who will implement this idea? Districts, State, event organizers or business. This could be a permit condition for an event or could be a part of an approval for a Solid Waste Implementation Plan (SWIP).

What expertise is needed to implement the idea?

Is an infrastructure needed? Recycling bins, posters, signs, promotional materials.

Research needed?

What are the challenges?

May be difficult to implement. Barrier is people's habits. Institution often is a barrier. Often put too many trash bins out and not enough recycling bins at large out door events and in some cases, the event organizers won't advertise recycling.

Tool Kit: 1). Anticipate number of attendees; 2). Provide a blue print for set up and infrastructure needed; 3). Provide help in writing a hauling contract for

disposal and recycling/composting; 4). Provide information on waste reduction opportunities such as using compostable products.

Permit conditions from town enforcing the requirement of the solid waste district for recycling.

Suggest permitting language.

Rate the event with a star system (gold, silver, bronze); rating system could go beyond recycling to include waste prevention and composting. We would have to work on standards for each component.

3. Landfill bans

The group discussed the need for an adequate infrastructure throughout the state in order to effectively ban materials from disposal. A schedule for implementation would have to be built into the ban if infrastructure improvements were needed. An example of one ban in place now is the mercury ban and associated collection program.

How much will this cost to implement? Low to moderate, depending on infrastructure needs in some parts of the state.

Is there a potential funding source?

Is this doable? Yes.

How can the results/successes be measured? Potentially in tons of materials being recycled or diverted from landfilling.

Who will implement this idea? State legislature would enact the ban. The state, along with districts would implement and enforce the ban. The state could require bans to be included in Solid Waste Implementation Programs (SWIP).

What expertise is needed to implement the idea?

Is an infrastructure needed? Yes, the infrastructure must be in place to make it convenient for people to bring banned materials for recycling and reuse.

Research needed?

Research what other states are doing. Investigate enforcement of bans. Identify specific materials for a ban based on which materials have existing markets.

4. Create a labeling seal of approval

The group discussed three potential categories of labels: a). a label for buy local / Vermont Product; b). a label promoting reduced packaging or no packaging; or, c). a label promoting the product is "sustainable" or made of recycled materials. In order for a label to be accepted and used appropriately, a set of clear and understandable standards must be developed. Ideally, businesses would want to participate, as the label would be sought out by consumers. Label should be cool and hip.

How much will this cost to implement? To develop the standards and get the word out to companies and consumers, estimated \$50 K. Would require a mailing and on line advertising. Label would need to be updated over time. There would be a cost to print the label as well.

Is there a potential funding source?

Is this doable? Yes, as a "Tool Kit", providing best practices to create label state meets Vermont guidelines standard

How can the results/successes be measured? If standards are clear and businesses and consumers trust and use the label.

Who will implement this idea?

What expertise is needed to implement the idea?

Is an infrastructure needed?

Research needed? Research existing labels. Look into "buy local" for packaging including partnering with VT Chamber or Agency of Agriculture to expand their seal of approval. Look at energy star program, use as a template if possible; also look at Sustainable Packaging Coalition (SPC). Look into the LEED program for LEED certified buildings, may be able to use some similar standards.

Challenges?

Product stewardship - people don't know what material is so don't know how to recycle at end of life, provide more information

Symbols such as the three arrows and the numbering system for recycling ONLY Identifies material, i.e. 7 is everything except 1-6 so can't be recycled. Must educate the consumer.

Where to draw the line between states for "buy local". Local may be across state lines in some regions.

Discussion

Include the transportation costs or reduced costs.

Some products use less energy with virgin material than recycled materials.

Timberland is doing this with shoes explains different contents addresses 5 key areas.

The legislature defined what is a Vermont product during the last legislative session, Spring 2007.

5. Assist manufacturers to be responsible for their packaging (product stewardship)

Item number 4 above leads to this priority or vice-versa, i.e. improving package to weight ratio of a product would move a company towards labeling that product as a green product. Companies would want to take credit for reducing packaging and for manufacturing with less waste.

Developing the specifications for # 4 would lead to # 5. # 4 is the reward for doing #5.

How much will this cost to implement?

Is there a potential funding source?

Is this doable? Difficult at best.

How can the results/successes be measured?

Who will implement this idea? State helping hand tool kit - not mandate needs to step in to help retool, reduce packaging.

What expertise is needed to implement the idea?

Is an infrastructure needed?

Research needed? Research product stewardship programs. Look at EPA design for the environment. Review Walmart's initiative to reduce packaging, it may actually affect the packaging and cost of all supplies.

6. Legislative mandates

The group decided that this priority is actually a tool for the five priorities listed above. Legislative mandates would be used to accomplish the above items if new regulations were needed or if the desired outcome was not being reached in the anticipated timeframe. Ideally, legislative actions would be incentives rather than mandates.

How much will this cost to implement? Low

Is there a potential funding source?

Is this doable? Yes

How can the results/successes be measured?

Who will implement this idea?

What expertise is needed to implement the idea?

Is an infrastructure needed?

Research needed? What legislative mandates have been proposed in other states or countries?

Challenges? Government mandates may exist that require minimum packaging for certain products. Any state or regional legislation would have to be in agreement with federal requirements.

Related Discussions

Add the word "recover" to the title as it pertains to energy. bury it rather than recover energy, whole opportunity dump in landfill and go buy foreign oil, Denmark processing up front burning outside of Brussels in city heat hospital complex.

Where do we go from here...

The group discussed the option for reforming subcommittees by topic (as discussed at the September 11 Steering Committee meeting). People agreed that there could be some benefit to forming subcommittees around activities rather than sectors, but no recommendation was reached.

Four members of the subcommittee will form a working group to look into priority number 4, a labeling seal of approval. Members include: Peter, Paul, Claire and Dave.