

Life Beyond Garbage: Vermont Waste Prevention and Diversion Strategies

By the *Vermont Waste Prevention Steering Committee*: a partnership of business, non-profit organizations, and local, state, and federal government stakeholders

The entire report, Beyond Waste: Vermont Waste Prevention and Reduction strategies, is available on line at <http://www.anr.state.vt.us/dec/wastediv/R3/DECwpPLAN.htm>. To reduce paper usage for print versions, we have reduced the margins of the report.

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Overarching Themes

In the course of identifying waste prevention strategies, a number of key overarching themes emerged.

- ***Public Education and Outreach***: Educate Vermonters about the value of waste prevention, why it is important, and how to prevent waste.
- ***Product Stewardship***: Ensure that responsibility for waste is shared by all those involved in a product's life cycle.
- ***Government Leadership***: State government must show leadership in preventing waste through its purchasing practices and other policies, such as its state building contracts.
- ***Infrastructure***: The state needs to develop collection and processing systems for reusable, recyclable, and compostable materials and provide incentives for the private sector to develop businesses that use and sell the materials.
- ***Mandates and Bans***: Mandates and bans can provide the drivers to help build an economy to reuse and recycle discarded materials, and ensure that resources are not wasted.
- ***Standards***: Standards can be developed to ensure that best practices are used for waste prevention, such as in designing and constructing buildings or manufacturing products. Standards can also insure that diversion efforts are conducted in an environmentally and socially responsible manner.
- ***Partnerships***: The State of Vermont must actively collaborate and coordinate with regional, national, and international efforts to change the way we manage our resources.

Priority Strategies

Traditional Recyclable Products (glass, metal, plastic, etc. listed in priority order)

- Require Pay-As-You-Throw (PAYT) programs in all sectors across the state.
- Require mandatory statewide recycling.
- Enact landfill disposal bans.
- Expand Vermont's bottle bill.
- Promote waste prevention in schools.
- Promote recycling away from home.

Construction Waste and Demolition Debris (C&D – listed in priority order)

- Institutionalize waste prevention, deconstruction, and recycling in project design, specify waste diversion in construction bid documents.
- Develop regional reuse and recycling markets.
- Use economic incentives to build reuse and recycling infrastructure.
- Institute a phased landfill ban of select C&D wastes.
- Educate the public about C&D waste reduction.
- Collaborate with national and regional organizations.

Organics (in no particular order)

- Expand the existing perishable food redistribution network.
- Expand and improve the statewide infrastructure for composting
- Enable small and large scale composting.
- Develop economic incentives, as precursors to mandates, to encourage organics waste prevention.
- Within specific timeframes, mandate composting for all generators.
- Increase general public and school education about organics waste prevention, reuse, and diversion.

Electronic Waste (e-waste -- listed in no particular order)

- The State will take a leadership role in promoting the use of Electronic Product Environmental Assessment Tool (EPEAT) standards for computer purchases throughout state government.
- Collect, expand, and standardize statewide data on e-waste generation, recycling, reuse, and disposal.
- Review existing regulations and environmental standards in use (other states, federal government) for e-waste recycling (best management practices) and adopt standards appropriate for Vermont.
- Expand and sustain public education about e-waste
- Assess the existing infrastructure for collection of e-waste.
- Develop businesses and markets for e-waste recycling and recycled materials in conjunction with state economic development initiatives.

- Implement phased landfill bans that include computers and peripherals, CRTs, televisions, uninterrupted power supplies /transformers, VCRs/DVDs, copiers/fax machines/printers, and cell phones.

Household Hazardous Waste (HHW-- listed in no particular order)

- ANR should develop a long range, 10-year HHW Management Plan that focuses on public awareness, infrastructure improvements, and extended producer responsibility to reduce the types of materials requiring management by municipalities.
- Establish a legislatively-appointed Advisory Council on Toxic Substances to assess hazardous, toxic, persistent, and bioaccumulative chemicals in consumer products and waste. Make recommendations to the Legislature and the Departments of Environmental Conservation and Health on methods to reduce impacts to human health and the environment.
- The State of Vermont should take a leadership role in product stewardship strategies for waste prevention and toxics use reduction in consumer products.
- The State of Vermont should take a leadership role in Environmentally Preferable Purchasing (EPP) to encourage the elimination of priority toxic substances in products and services purchased by the public and private sectors.