

S U M M A R Y

THE SUSTAINABLE VISION FOR WASHINGTON'S SOLID WASTE SYSTEM

ROUND TABLE MEETING 1

March 6, 2001

CENTRAL REGION

GENERAL MEETING SUMMARY

The Work Has Just Begun

The "Sustainable Vision for Washington State's Solid Waste System" round table meeting series brings community, business, and government together to identify coordinated approaches to solid waste issues. In spring 2001 meetings are being held in each of four regions throughout the state – a total of sixteen meetings – to develop regional recommendations for revising the State Solid Waste Plan.

Background

Ecology is coordinating the effort to revise the State Solid Waste Plan, which was last updated in 1991. RCW 70.95.260 directs Ecology to coordinate the development of a plan for all areas of the state that "looks to the future for twenty years as a guide in carrying out a state coordinated solid waste management program." The draft vision for the revised plan incorporates the top priority for handling waste, which is waste reduction, as stated in the Solid Waste Management – Recovery & Recycling Law – 70.95 RCW.

In early March 2001 "Meeting 1" of the four-meeting series was held in four regions across the state – eastern, central, southwest, and northwest. Participants discussed solid waste issues of importance in the region, reviewed a draft vision, and received a copy of "Issues Identification: Issues for Consideration and Discussion," Ecology publication # 01-07-001. This document summarizes the work to date on issues identification by Ecology staff, Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC) members and other

WHERE WE WANT TO GO - REGIONAL PERSPECTIVES

Review of Draft Vision for Solid Waste Planning

Participants reviewed a draft long-range vision that reaches beyond the 20 year planning horizon. They raised issues of importance in their region regarding the impact, challenges and opportunities such a vision would pose solid waste in their region.

A sustainable economic system exists, based on resource and energy conservation, pollution prevention, waste reduction and material reuse. The historically separate efforts to protect the environment and to promote economic development have merged.

Businesses balance material and energy use with practices that reinvest in environmental capital, recognizing that such stewardship is the basis for their survival and profit.

Individuals recognize their role in achieving and maintaining sustainability as inhabitants and consumers. Consumers demand, are provided with, and choose goods and services with the lowest life-cycle impacts on energy and materials use.

Government economic development policies provide incentives to businesses and industry to achieve and maintain sustainability.

Communities create and sustain local systems that support growth within the limits of the environmental carrying capacity.

stakeholders for consideration in the state plan revision and is available on the project web site at: <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/swfa/swplan>. The issue papers fall into three general headings: where we want to go, what we need to do today, and how we will move toward a more sustainable future. Throughout the round table meeting series participants will explore each of the issue paper topics as they relate to these headings.

Participants at the Meeting 1 sessions identified solid waste issues unique to their regions that relate to the draft sustainable vision. These issues, along with others raised in the earlier issue papers, were examined for their importance in the state solid waste plan revision. This summary of regional issues identified in Meeting 1 will serve as the foundation for the continued development of regional recommendations. Regional discussion points can be found in the *Where We Want To Go - Regional Perspectives* section of this summary.

Joining In

The regional round table series is designed for regions to work together to address jointly identified solid waste issues. Participants will recommend an overall, mutually beneficial approach to the state solid waste plan that takes into consideration regionally specific needs.

Participants of Meeting 1 formed the initial foundation for the regionally specific dialogue regarding solid waste issues. All "stakeholders" (all interested residents) throughout the state are encouraged to join their regional dialogues during the three remaining meetings.

OVERVIEW OF FOUR MEETING SERIES

The goal of the round table meetings is to provide a forum for participants to work directly together with other stakeholders and have maximum possible input to the state solid waste plan revision at a regional level. This proactive involvement engages participants in dialogue with others of like mind who share similar interests on solid waste issues in "sectors." The following are the self-defining sectors that participants at Meeting 1 worked in:

- Business
- Environmental
- Government
- Solid Waste Industry
- Community and Civic Groups

PARTICIPANT COMMENTS

- Role of State Solid Waste Plan and Revision -

Question: How much influence will the revised state plan have?

Response: The plan revision is intended to serve as a blueprint for everyone's solid waste activities. Some affected entities, such as business and industry, will be encouraged to voluntarily undertake various activities and initiatives, such as waste reduction programs, product redesign, etc. Other sectors, such as local governments, may be affected through rules and guidelines, such as solid waste planning guidelines, or grant and loan eligibilities. At this point, the plan revision is viewed as a guide for establishing and strengthening partnerships between all sectors of society in our state and beyond. Those partnerships will explore and create ways to transition to a more sustainable long-term system to manage solid waste and preserve our quality of life.

- Economics of Region -

The financial disparity between Eastern Washington and Western Washington leaves the Eastern region less money available to fulfill solid waste mandates or initiatives. Both the local governments and community members at large are impacted by financial constraints. The financial constraints of individuals to participate in programs, such as recycling, are a factor as well as governments funding constraints.

The Cascade School District Recycling Program is limited due to funding restrictions, both to move materials to market and to improve the collection area. The site where the recycling materials are collected and held until transfer is vulnerable to becoming a dump and hazardous area, as materials are not moved quickly enough.

There is a huge disparity in the rural part of the state, as they do not have landfill fees to support programs and activities. In addition, the funds to move recycled goods are not available to support that effort as well.

A disparity exists in the political will, public perception, and available resources in the Eastern and rural areas of the state, as distinct from the Western regions. A rural based program has unique challenges. If a material can be landfilled at a lower cost, there is a disconnection between the handling of that material as a resource to be used in other ways.

Economic challenges exist that keeps things inequitable in the rural portion of the state due to the smaller quantities and higher transportation fees to move materials to a market.

- Ability to Truly Influence State Plan Revisions -

The economic base of the Central and rural areas of the state are not sufficient to represent issues unique to the

Participants decide, based on their interests in solid waste issues, which of these groups they wish to work with. The perspectives unique to each of these sectors will be reflected in the regional recommendations to the state solid waste plan revision. Issues in common within regions and across the state will be considered in the overall statewide recommendations.

The April, May, and June meetings in each region will provide on-going discussion regarding a sustainable vision for solid waste.

In April, participants will identify milestones for the issues identified by participants in Meeting 1. The two goals of the April meetings are to identify indicators for sustainability for a long-term vision, beyond 60 years, and also to determine sustainability-related milestones that meet the current solid waste systems' needs.

In May, participants will identify strategies and alternatives they wish to see considered for the region to achieve the milestones identified in April.

In June, participants will bring together the vision, milestones, and strategies into a regional recommendation to support movement toward a sustainable approach to solid waste.

OUTCOMES FOR PLAN DEVELOPMENT

State Solid Waste Plan

The State Solid Waste Plan is a blueprint or guide that provides a long-range vision for solid waste activities around the state. The state solid waste plan has been updated three times since 1972, and is currently a decade old. New waste streams have emerged and conditions, economically, socially, and environmentally have changed in the state. Ecology recognized that the plan no longer serves as a current guide to coordinating solid waste programs and that a revision to lead us into the future is needed.

What the Revision Will Do

The foundation of this state solid waste plan revision is to create a more sustainable future, which includes the recognition that the solid waste being managed and disposed of represents a significant drain on the state resources needed to support our society and quality of life.

The revised plan will serve as a blueprint for local communities and state and federal agencies that implement solid waste and natural resource programs. It will provide direction on

region when decisions are being made at state level or by the Department of Ecology.

- Complexity of Regulations -

Education is needed to increase private entities' and communities' understanding of the complex regulations. The complexity presents obstacles for participating.

Question: Please explain more fully what is meant by the sustainable economic system described in the Draft Vision Statement.

Response: The draft vision statement speaks to the goal or ideal state of solid waste in a time period beyond 20 years; it may be 50, 60, 70 or 80 years. It describes the intention of the goals and strategies that will be used to guide solid waste statewide. The activity it intends to cover includes all those who generate waste, not just those who have traditionally handled waste. The vision depicts a role for all layers of community and economic activity to be partners in a sustainable approach to solid waste.

The draft vision statement speaks in a totally different language than what will be relevant and meaningful to the rural communities of Washington State. The application of this language will not speak to the constituents of the Central region.

- Sustainability and Solid Waste -

It was noted that the Central region does not have a broad-based economy, or the vitality that other regions of the state have. Currently all the economic activities are depressed. While a more broadly based economy can absorb the costs associated with changes in the way solid waste is handled, the concern was raised that this region could not.

REGIONAL ISSUE IDENTIFICATION BY SECTOR

Participants explored issues of regional importance for a vision of solid waste that incorporates the theme of sustainability. Breakout groups provided the opportunity to explore the issues from the perspectives of government, solid waste industry, business, environment, and community and civic groups. Five main topics, from the issue papers were provided as discussion points: Universe of Solid Waste, Waste Prevention, Waste Diversion, True Cost of Solid Waste, Sustainability, see the general meeting summary's *Issue Identification by Sector and Region* section for additional detail on these headings. Participants also had the opportunity to raise additional issues in the small groups. All of these were reviewed for the level of importance they may play in the state plan revision process.

While participants were given the opportunity to rank two high, medium, and low issues for inclusion in the state plan

the regulatory and voluntary roles, as well as outline partnerships with others in the community that can help reduce waste and its impacts. The revision includes looking at a larger portion of the solid waste universe than has been planned for in the past. The plan will result in impacts to and involvement of many different stakeholders than traditionally have been involved. The plan revision should provide the framework and goals for everyone's role in managing waste more sustainably.

It is possible that the recommendations for the revision could be regional in nature and not be "one-size-fits-all." Regional needs can be taken into account in this way.

An orientation to the state plan revision history was provided at Meeting 1 and is summarized briefly in the following section:

History of the Process to Date

Ecology began working with the State SWAC and a number of local government officials in early 2000 on the approach for updating the plan. The initial idea was to update the plan in phases. Information revealed in this early phase of work indicated that a quick update would not be as useful to local governments as a full revision to the state solid waste plan. Throughout the focus groups, interviews, and discussions in 2000 two common themes arose regarding the direction for the future of solid waste: waste prevention and sustainability.

Work groups were formed to explore issues and provide background necessary to determine what elements will be included in the revision to the state solid waste plan. The groups had broad representation with over sixty people from outside Ecology. Over fifty meetings to date were conducted to develop the issue papers, which provide the foundation for the round table discussions. The full text of the issue papers can be found in the "Issues Identification" document*. The issues covered were not meant to be exhaustive of all the issues related to solid waste; they include the following topics:

- Sources and Quantities of Solid Waste
- Roles, Responsibilities, and Authorities
- Litter and Illegal Dumping
- Collection
- Waste Disposal Reduction and Avoidance
- Waste Reduction

revision; these were not intended as a voting mechanism for the process. These 'rankings' provided the participants a dialogue starting point. In the full group discussion that followed the breakouts, participants further explained the additional issues raised. The following summarizes the issues and their importance by sector.

Community & Civic Breakout Group

The participant that identified and examined issues of importance from the community & civic perspective found that waste prevention and true costs of waste were highly important to consider in the plan revision. Sustainability and waste diversion were of medium importance, and addressing the universe of solid waste was lower in importance. This participant identified education as an additional issue one that is essential to move any of these issues forward in a state plan's revision.

Solid Waste Industry Breakout Group

Participants in the solid waste industry dialogue identified the true cost of waste as highly important to the region; they noted that it is inclusive of many things. For some participants, this captures keeping costs down for customers. In addition, true cost needs to reflect impacts that may be uniquely felt by rural areas, as the east side of the state cannot afford to sustain the regulations that are developed in the western side of the state. Some felt that as costs go up and are reflected in true cost analysis waste prevention efforts would be stimulated.

The economic survival of northern rural Washington was identified as an additional issue in this region. The universe of solid waste had mixed reviews by the group. Some felt that it is a valuable issue, as we need to know where solid waste is coming from before you try to handle it. The point was also raised that enough work has been done to figure out what waste there is. If this is included, the focus in this topic area must be to figure out how to deal with all sources and types of waste.

Government Breakout Group

Participants in the government perspective group expressed that waste prevention and diversion are highly important to the region. Some felt that the universe of solid waste was tied to waste prevention, and therefore would be addressed through activities under that heading. While waste diversion does appeal to people, the impact of costs directly affects the ability of the rural regions to participate.

- Product Stewardship
- Landfills, Past, Present and Future
- True Costs of Solid Waste (includes Economics of Recycling)
- Recycling

* Ecology publication Issues Identification: Issues for Consideration and Discussion, # 01-07-001 contains each of the issue papers and is available on the project web site, <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/swfa/swplan>

Outcome of the Round Table Meetings

The plan recommendations are not written at this time; there is no drafted language to review and comment on. The recommendations drafted at the regional round tables will provide a foundation for the next phase of feasibility study and revision language development, which will follow the round tables in summer of 2001.

March – June 2001 is the time to identify what is needed to create a state solid waste plan that will have support from the diverse stakeholders who will be asked to participate in implementation activities. The door is wide open; there is flexibility to determine what is needed for the future. The draft language for the state solid waste plan will come out in Spring of 2002, and will be finalized in Summer 2002.

DIVERSITY OF PERSPECTIVES ON SOLID WASTE

The March round table meetings centered on where we want to go – what we want our future solid waste system to look like. Thoughts and ideas raised in several of the issue papers (contained in the “Issues Identification” document) relate to this future system and what it should accomplish.

Universe of Solid Waste

Issue Paper #1 Sources and Quantities of Solid Waste from the “Issues Identification” document examines the types and sources of solid waste in Washington State. A diagram depicting this universe of solid waste was presented to participants for consideration in the scope of the plan revision. The current and increasing levels of waste generation, new waste streams, and increasing impact on our resources, financial, social, and environmental give rise to need for consideration of all categories of non-hazardous, non-radioactive solid wastes in this plan

For some waste diversion was considered more important to address in the state plan revision as it is simpler to do than waste prevention. Education on waste prevention was raised as an important element in the success of future efforts in that area. A participant noted that sustainability was too far out there and that the other issues raised for discussion need to be addressed first. Conservation of resources was noted as an issue to be explored.

Environmental Breakout Group

The participant in this group noted that it would be important to understand the true costs of solid waste, from both the government and the community perspective. It was also suggested that state and/or federal approaches encourage industry, with kid gloves, to move toward sustainability, perhaps with tax incentives. Industrial incentive programs were considered important and raised as an additional issue that pertains to the business perspective.

Waste diversion was also considered highly important. An example was given for this region; the National Forest Service must develop new forest practices to deal with the burn ban in the region. The use of woody waste debris for energy production is an approach that needs to be explored. Sustainability was not considered as high a priority as this focus could drive changes with negative impacts on the communities’ economy. Education is needed to build community members understanding of sustainability to increase its support for implementation.

CLOSING DRAFT VISION REVIEW BY PARTICIPANTS

Participants were asked to review again the draft vision, following the review of issue identification across sectors. The group was asked to consider how the perspectives across sector reflect the issues of importance in the region. The following summarizes questions and comments both general and specific, regarding the draft vision and its relevance to the Central Region.

- True Costs -

True costs are not fully recognized and they need to be.

- Role of the Plan Revision -

It needs to be made clear whom the plan will address, and what the audience is - political, legislative or internal to the Department of Ecology. How the plan will impact or drive change on the local level also needs to be considered. It was expressed that it should be the other way around; the operating level should drive the way the plan revision is developed.

revision. This includes the following categories:

- Municipal waste
- Industrial waste
- Resource use and extraction waste
- Transfer waste
- Inert waste
- Moderate risk waste

Sustainability

Participants were challenged to look beyond existing systems and consider longer-term visions of sustainability in their region. Sustainability was explained as "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

A question arose in all regions regarding this theme of sustainability. Where did it come from? The foundation work done over the past year found sustainability was a consistent theme, in focus groups, work groups, local solid waste plans' visions and goal statements, as well as the state law that names waste reduction as the first priority. Increasingly, the federal direction for solid waste, which also informs the state's future, is moving toward more sustainable approaches to solid waste. All these factors led to establishing sustainability as the focus for the state plan.

Where previous plan revisions and subsequent funding centered on recycling and the Municipal Waste Stream; there have not been great strides in waste reduction systems. While a strong recycling infrastructure does exist in the state, it is experiencing limiting factors. We will need to invest in the future while maintaining the current solid waste system to make the transitions necessary to get to where we want to go.

WHERE WE WANT TO GO

Review of Draft Vision for Solid Waste Planning

Participants reviewed a draft long-range vision that reaches beyond the 20 year planning horizon. They raised issues of importance in their region regarding the impact, challenges and opportunities such a vision would pose solid waste in their region. A summary of the regional responses are located in the *Regional Review of the Draft Vision* section of this document.

Question: Will the plan be able to address regionally relevant issues? A statewide plan, one size fits all may not work? People would find it very meaningful to know that there is a 'possibility' to have the plan reflects such regionally related issues and needs.

Response: There will be one state solid waste plan. The plan will lay out a long-range vision for the state and will include recommendations for our current solid waste system and also for how we can move forward toward a more sustainable vision. It is certainly possible that the recommendations for action could be regional in nature and not be "one-size-fits-all" for what we do and when we do it. So, regional needs can be taken into account in this way.

- Ranking in General -

While the ranking may be a good measure of attitudes, values and perceptions, these do not reflect the economic reality. The cultural part though may be the most important aspect of this whole issue regarding rural Washington needs. The resources are limited, opportunities are limited, and the least cost for tomorrow is the most likely approach to be taken in issues of solid waste.

- Sustainability -

There needs to be assurance of the public sector to have the capital to support the industry to survive.

The citizenry needs to be able to participate and have stability in the solid waste system to sustain the businesses in the region.

Capital investments in the current system need to be considered as the plan revision moves forward. Changes could place those in jeopardy, and the local communities need assurance for their sustainability.

Some local jurisdictions in the Central Region are in the 2nd year of their solid waste plans. It is important that they can implement what they have set out to do. The costs associated with a change in the approach to solid waste are a concern as well; they cannot become prohibitive or the alternatives won't happen.

Small systems needs have to be addressed or commercial operations will not hold up under the change in waste streams and rules governing them. The inability to move and play economically in these new waste streams and processes will play into the success of these approaches.

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ISSUE IDENTIFICATION BY SECTOR AND REGION

Participants explored issues of regional importance for a vision of solid waste that incorporates the theme of sustainability. Breakout groups provided the opportunity to explore the issues from the perspectives of government, solid waste industry, business, environment, and community and civic groups. Participants had the opportunity to raise additional issues to the five main topics, drawn from issue papers that were provided as discussion points. These included:

Universe of Solid Waste: Focus on addressing the sources and generation points of various waste materials throughout the extraction, processing, manufacturing, sale, use and disposal.

Waste reduction: Concentrate on dealing with materials that are currently considered waste and look for ways to turn them into products. Preventing and/or reducing the volume and/or toxicity of waste.

Waste disposal diversion: Emphasize the diversion of waste materials that are generated out of end disposal by diverting them to other uses (such as land application).

True costs: Focus on accounting for all of the costs of solid waste decisions pertaining to current system or new ways of doing things, such as social, resource, health, pollution, and economic.

Sustainability: Focus on the creation of a future system that promotes sustainability, which generally is defined as "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

While participants were given the opportunity to rank two high, medium, and low issues for inclusion in the state plan revision; these were not intended as a voting mechanism for the process. These 'rankings' provided the participants a dialogue starting point. In the full group discussion that followed the breakouts, participants further explained the additional issues raised and those of high importance to the sectors of perspective. A summary of the region's the issues and their importance by sector are located in the *Regional Issues Identification by Sector* section of this document.

THE NEXT STEP

Participants at Meeting 1 were encouraged to note who needs to be present at these round tables to capture the diversity of perspectives in the region. Those present appreciated that many new stakeholders play a fundamental role in developing regionally relevant perspectives on a sustainable vision for Washington State's solid waste system. The networking efforts within the region will continue to encourage participation throughout the meeting series.

Each of the four regional meetings will build upon work done in the previous meeting. The diversity of perspectives on solid waste issues and sustainability identified in Meeting 1 will be considered in the next steps.

At the April meeting, participants will start by examining the issues identified in Meeting 1. The two goals of the April meetings are to identify indicators for sustainability for a long-term vision, beyond 60 years, and also to determine sustainability-related milestones that meet the current solid waste systems' needs.

In May, participants will identify strategies and alternatives they wish to see considered for the region to achieve the milestones identified in April.

June meeting participants will draw together the vision, milestones, and strategies into a regional recommendation to support movement toward a sustainable approach to solid waste.

All are welcome and encouraged to join their regional dialogues during the three remaining meetings. Your views on the vision will directly contribute to regional recommendations. Join us for this opportunity to contribute to the Washington State's economic vitality, ecological health, and social well being.

THE NEXT STEP

At the April round table meeting Central Region participants will be tasked to consider how best to identify the milestones and strategies that will address the following issues regional importance that were identified by participants at the meeting.

- Universe of waste
- Waste prevention
- True cost
- Waste diversion
- Sustainability
- Education
- Economic survival of northern rural Washington
- Industrial incentive programs

ECOLOGY RESOURCE PEOPLE

Headquarters,
Solid Waste - Cheryl Strange, Project Manager
Yakima Office, Solid Waste Manager - Darlene Frye
Yakima Office, Solid Waste - Kip Eagles
Bellevue Office, Solid Waste - Don Seeburger

CENTRAL REGION MEETING 1 PARTICIPANTS

Glen Austin, Zippy Disposal Service
Don Davidson, Methow Valley Sanitation Service
Ron Draggio, Douglas County Solid Waste
Lee Heinrichs, Cascade School District
Robert Johnson, Wenatchee Clean Air Coalition, USFS PAC
Shane Martin, Chelan-Douglas Health District
Gina Monteverde, Methow Recycling Center
Steven Wulf, Waste Management



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