

# 6th Annual Potomac Watershed Trash Summit

October 19, 2011

8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.



CLEAN LAND.  
SAFE WATER.  
HEALTHY LIVES.

Founder's Hall

George Mason University

3351 Fairfax Drive, Arlington, VA 22201

## Cigarette Butts, Tires, Carts, and Sharps... OH MY!

*Unique Items, Unique Solutions*

### Roundtable Notes

**Focus:** Guess what we found during the 2011 Potomac River Watershed Cleanup? Tires, cigarette butts, carts and sharps (needles, syringes). How do we address the prevalence of these odd and dangerous items in the watershed? Speakers from a variety of organizations will present their unique challenges and the solutions that will also help us identify ways that stakeholders can make a difference.

**Moderator:** The Honorable Jacqueline Goodall, Mayor, Town of Forest Heights

#### Presenters:

- John Long, President, Clean Bread and Cheese Stream
- Kathy Gold, Volunteer, Coalition for Safe Needle Disposal Clifton Curtis, Director, Varda, Inc.

#### Key Questions:

- Why is each item so prevalent?
- What are the main challenges to disposal of each item?
- Who are the stakeholders in the solution of each item?
- How can 'disposers' be engaged?
- What are immediate next steps to increasing responsible disposal?

#### Notes from Cigarette Butts, Tires, Carts, and Sharps: Odd Items in our Watershed Roundtable

AFF Staff member in this roundtable, Ashlea Smith, [asmith@fergusonfoundation.org](mailto:asmith@fergusonfoundation.org)

**Moderator-** Jacqueline Goodall, Mayor of the Town of Forest Height, Maryland

#### Action Items that developed from this Roundtable-

- Speakers will be asked to inform the 24<sup>th</sup> Annual Potomac Watershed Cleanup Site Leaders on handling of dangerous and unusual items which in turn shall be broadcasted to all cleanup site participants in April 2012.
- Site Leaders will be asked to tally the number of odd and dangerous items they collect- with focus paid to the four items discussed today plus plastic bags.
- Add information regarding these particular types of litter to the Trash Free Potomac Watershed Website- [www.trashfreepotomac.org](http://www.trashfreepotomac.org)
- Encourage partners to reach out to groups if interested in focusing on particular types of litter.
- Information from Roundtable will influence the Initiative outreach- incorporate statistics into presentations to enforcement officers and community groups.

- Local jurisdictions asked to forward legislation they have on the books regarding disposal and cleanup of the items discussed today for future reference should an Odd Items in the Watershed Task Force come together.

### **Introduction:**

Mayor Goodall identified herself as a smoker and she related that she has previously flicked cigarettes into water but now she considers herself a 'reformed litterer' and carries a can with her to dispose of her cigarettes properly- she has been doing this for many years and considers it the right thing to do as a smoker. She went on to talk about sharps and her experience with diabetes and her efforts to properly dispose of her syringes for her insulin. During the Annual Potomac Watershed cleanups this problem of odd and dangerous items presented themselves (such as mass amounts of cigarette butts, tires, carts, and sharps/syringes). This roundtable is about what WE can do about these items littering the watershed. She spoke about the breakdown of litter found during 23<sup>rd</sup> cleanup and that there was an average of 36 pounds collected per person. Description of two basic problems with litter in the watershed: 1) land-borne litter (the stuff we throw out) becomes marine debris, and 2) Litter is (both on land & in the water) not harmless- for instance, cigarette butts leach chemicals into the water and are confused as food for wildlife plus misplaced and dumped tires and plastic bags can become breeding places for mosquitos, among other pests.

### **Introduction of the speakers:**

1. **On Sharps:** Kathy Gold – Volunteer for Coalition for Safe Needle Disposal ([www.safeneedledisposal.org](http://www.safeneedledisposal.org))
2. **On Tires:** Steve Coe – Program coordinator, Waste Tires and Recycling Division, Virginia Department of Environmental Quality
3. **On Carts:** John Long – President, Clean Bread and Cheese Creek
4. **On Cigarette Butts:** Clif Curtis, Director Varda Group.

### **First Presenter: Kathy Gold**

*(PowerPoint Presentation to compliment these notes named: "Trash Summit 2011\_Odd Items Roundtable\_'Sharps'\_Kathy Gold")*

Nurse and diabetes educator involved in safe needle disposal because largest disposal of needles is by people with diabetes. Kathy often gets the asked how to dispose of their needles. She believes that the burden of disposal should be on the sources of needles. Find needles and syringes everywhere – there is not regulation for disposal by individual households. Projection is that 1 in 3 people will have diabetes in the future and use will go up as will disposal. Currently, 13.5 million in US are disposing 7.8 million sharps/syringes annually. Of those 13.5 million, 1.5 million are illicit drug users. Numbers are growing 11-12% due to the advent of people are being put on insulin earlier and other injection treatments. Other diseases are beginning to use syringes on a daily basis (HIV, etc.) as well.

If you get stuck with a needle – there is much anxiety – this is a public health issue because you can't know what the needle was used for or by whom. Those that are pricked must go through multiple kinds of treatments for possible exposures. Most people just assumed that the disposal of needles has been tightly regulated because it is in hospitals, but many do not realize that there are no regulations for household use.

Coalition for Safe Needle Disposal is gaining the attention of industry, public and federal agencies. It is spurring development of grass-roots community efforts and evolving state and federal legislation. Currently, patients are asked to put needles in a thick plastic detergent bottle, tape/wrap it up, and throw it away. But what do these bottles full of needles end up as when they get crushed and pop out onto streets? Hazardous waste.

Proper Disposal: Sharps/syringes need to be shipped to a hospital or proper facility, but it is expensive. Diabetes patients are already financially drained due to the price of medicine and treatment and it would be even more taxing for families to properly dispose of medical waste this way. A brand called Chrysalis provides containers as an easy solution to dispose of sharps in their special containers and they pick up. MA is doing a pilot program with this at the moment using advertising on side of containers to offset costs. Bins are found in pharmacies, hospitals.

## **Programs across the US:**

NJ – hospitals have agreed to take patients needles but it's not well publicized, NY has similar program but it is difficult to get to disposal site on hospital property – difficult for elderly patients. Little Rock, AR – agreements with pharmacies waste departments, any patient that needs syringes and they will provide red waste containers to patients to be thrown in dump. CA – regulation that no needles are allowed in the trash, but it is an un- or under-funded mandate and thus under-regulated. They tried to pass a law that pharmaceutical companies need to bear the burden, but Gov. vetoed law MA – passed regulation, but it was underfunded as well.

Coalition for safe needle disposal: identify states on their website and their efforts to deal with this problem. Working with post office to find a solution to ship disposed needles safely and legally. Working on legislation. Working to hold pharmaceutical companies responsible for disposal.

Coalition for safe needle disposal: Executive Director is Jennie Schuman, [www.safeneedledisposal.org](http://www.safeneedledisposal.org).

## **Local Efforts:**

There are two groups working locally on this issue: Committee for Safe Needle Disposal in DC metropolitan area and the District Columbia Diabetes Educators. There is Call for others to work with to help implement solutions from an environmental perspective. If interested in joining this effort, contact Kathy Gold at [kathygold1@verizon.net](mailto:kathygold1@verizon.net).

### **Q: What happens during a cleanup if you come across a needle?**

A:- Don't touch it, you should have a container with you to put them in, a detergent bottle, better since they are thicker.

**Q: (John Long, President, Clean Bread and Cheese Creek): We have a special team designated to pick up dangerous material (wear autopsy gloves to avoid being stuck).**

For more information, contact Mrs. Gold at [kathy@kathygoldcde.org](mailto:kathy@kathygoldcde.org)

## **Handouts and Comments**

(accessible at [www.trashsummit.org](http://www.trashsummit.org), click the button '2011 Notes and Handouts')

- Audience member comments (Russell Klein, Principal, RK & Associates): see handout titled "RK Comments on Sharps"
- Two Handouts and an article from this speaker:
  - Needle Disposal Legislation and Options across the united states
  - New Needle Usage Statistics
  - Analysis: The Impact of Needle, Syringe, and Lancet Disposal on the Community by Kathleen Gold, R.N., M.S.N., C.D.E.

## **Second Presenter: Steve Coe**

*(PowerPoint Presentation to compliment these notes named: "Trash Summit 2011\_Odd Items Roundtable\_'Tires'\_Steve Coe")*

### **Introduction:**

Trash Summits had traditionally focused on litter and recycling but not a special kind of litter: Tires. Mr. Coe is known in VA as the "Tire Guy". He spends most of his time talking with people who ask how they can clean up their tire piles for free. But governments don't do it for free. Virginia ended its free cleanup of program of waste tire piles years ago.

Tires are recyclable! – can be reused and recycled as material for landfills, art, construction projects, etc., etc., etc. They are best used on your car but they can be used in so many ways once their usefulness is spent.

### **Life cycle of tire:**

1. Manufactured
2. Used on cars

3. Discarded OR recycled/reused/retreaded/burned for tire derived fuel.

Tires belong on your car or responsibly disposed- Not illegally dumped or littered! Many people collect them for other purposes, planters, tire swings, etc. When we're in the field, we can tell a difference between tires being stored behind the garage versus, say, left in a field on someone's property, (picture of a GIANT tire pile in the country where they were being 'collected for possible resale'- *but that never happened*).

#### **Practical reuses for tires-** examples in ppt

- Tires have been used as temporary wave action deterrent in Alabama, used other places to deter erosion.

#### **Flammability issue:**

Tires with debris in or around them can cause fires more easily. Tires do not usually start fires- they FUEL them for very long periods of time due to the high BTUs in the material itself. VA tire regulation started 15 years ago after a large tire fire plume went all the way up to Pennsylvania and burned for 3 months! This is one of the primary reasons we don't want tires out there in the environment to begin with. It is important to work with local government. If groups are doing a litter clean up, ask if there is assistance for tire recycling.

#### **Advice for doing litter cleanups –**

Don't discard tires! Important to understand that they have value and should not be stored outside because they collect water and are breeding grounds for mosquitos and other bugs. Make sure you work with the local government to understand how they deal with tire recycling.

#### **Fun suggestion for reusing tires:**

Tire swings, can be ground up into poured crumb rubber, shoes, planters, physical fitness aid (have people turn them over, hit them with sledge hammers), create art (showed picture of horse statue in MS made from tires. Important to remember that Individuals are the medium for getting tires recycled, since governments cannot accrue the cost of all tire cleanups.

#### **Q: Is there a point at which tires cannot be recycled? Like if it was found in a stream?**

A: Tires do not leach anything- they are inert. If it resembles a tire, no matter how old or beat up it is, it can still be shredded, burned for fuel or used in various ways.

#### **Q: What the penalty for dumping in VA?**

A: Fines start at \$2500, jail time and you lose your license.

#### **Q: Is there any way to track tires and who bought and sold them?**

A: too difficult to know who dumped it, passes many hands from seller to buyer. NO way to know for sure who the tire belonged to.

For more information, contact Mr. Coe at [steve.coe@deq.virginia.gov](mailto:steve.coe@deq.virginia.gov)

#### **Handouts and Comments**

(accessible at [www.trashsummit.org](http://www.trashsummit.org), click the button '2011 Notes and Handouts')

- Frequently Asked Questions on Waste Tires from Mr. Coe
- Waste Tire Management Handout- Virginia DEQ Resources

#### **Third Speaker: John Long**

*(PowerPoint Presentation to compliment these notes named: "Trash Summit 2011\_Odd Items Roundtable\_'Carts'\_John Long")*

Clean Bread and Cheese Creek is an all-volunteer organization. NO funding. The groups does several cleanups a year and in the first official clean up Plainfield Road Section (Baltimore is the nearest large city) in September 2009 we found the first littered shopping cart, in total found 36 for that cleanup. Area is near a shopping center. At another cleanup in November 2010, found 14 carts. Most carts were found in the streams. Carts were stacked together in stream and create debris piles and further erosion. April 2011 – 26 shopping carts. September 2011 – 36 carts. This area is over a mile from the shopping center. For example – BK parking lot is funneled toward the creek. Some areas are very difficult to get carts out of – Norris farm Section down a steep ravine.

Dundalk County is using regulations from 1954 to regulate litter. Carts are difficult to remove from mud, roots grow around them. Can take up to 3 hours to remove one cart. Once cart is out, Baltimore County requires that they be disassembled before being thrown into dumpster. Carts are disassembled with sledge hammers, monster trucks! Metal goes into one recycling container and plastic goes into different recycling cart. Take approximately 45 min to properly dispose of one shopping cart

*How do they get there? Quite Simply, They're stolen!* By a variety of people, young, old, and in between.

#### **Reaction from local elected officials:**

Senator Norman Stone assisted at the 9/12/09 cleanup. Called Giant store manager about brand new carts found as abandoned, manager refused to pick them up even after the Senator acknowledge who he was, too. Attorney General Doug Gansler was horrified at the amount of carts being found during clean ups. Baltimore County Council Chairman John A. Olszewski Sr. considered imposing a fee on shopping cart owners on not reclaiming their property. Political opponent, "Buzz" Beeler, responded to this idea by saying the person responsible ought to be is the person who stole it. He claimed that prices would go up if this fee was imposed- if they can be caught in the first place.

Hundreds of cities and counties have regulations for shopping carts that are found and not reclaimed. Fees range from \$25 - \$100. Companies are forming that charge a monthly fee to go around looking for shopping carts clean them up and return them to their owners. Many retailers think it's unfair to charge them for their property being stolen.

#### **Avoiding the loss:**

Quarter Lock: costs \$10-15 to add to your cart. Magnetic Wheel Lock: 20 – 25 to add to your cart. Brand new shopping carts run from 200-300 apiece. You would think that retailers would want their carts returned at a \$100 fee, because it is cheaper for retailers to pay the fee, rather than buy new carts which range in price between \$150 and \$300. Unfortunately that is just not happening.

In a 4.5 mile stream (Bread and Cheese Creek- a tributary to the Back River and the Chesapeake Bay), 143 shopping carts have been pulled out in the last three years.

#### **Q: Do you think the reason you found so many carts is because it hadn't been clean up before?**

A: Possibly, but at least one cart accumulates every three weeks.

Statement from Audience: To respond to that, the homeless will sometimes use the carts to carry their items and its often how many carts end up in these very inaccessible areas. In terms of regulation, retail employees are most likely not willing to tell an elderly person or a family with lots of children to not carry off carts that they are using to get their groceries home, but that's where it starts.

For more information, contact John Long at- [Clean bread and cheese creek@yahoo.com](mailto:Clean_bread_and_cheese_creek@yahoo.com)

#### **Handouts and Comments**

(accessible at [www.trashsummit.org](http://www.trashsummit.org), click the button '2011 Notes and Handouts')

- 1-pager on Clean Bread and Cheese Creek
- Stream Cleanup Results- through September 24<sup>th</sup>, 2011

#### **Fourth Speaker: Clifton Curtis**

*(PowerPoint Presentation to compliment these notes: "Trash Summit 2011\_Odd Items Roundtable\_'Cigarette Butts'\_Clif Curtis")*

Cigarette Butts: Making the Environmental Case. Mr. Curtis took on the project of determining the environmental burden of cigarette butts to help find a solution to the cigarette butt pollution problem. He works directly on a campaign called The Cigarette Butt Pollution Project, [www.cigwaste.org](http://www.cigwaste.org), which does research, policy advocacy and partners with other groups in order to raise awareness and reduce the problem. Since 2008, they have been putting together a toolkit for organizations and institutions to adopt.

Cigarette butts have been determined as the number one littered item in the world throughout the long history of the International Coastal Cleanups

Research: Tobacco control people, and other local CA environmental groups to put together a toolkit to deal with butt waste. Main areas: Policy advocacy, partnering.

### **Butts and the Environment:**

International coastal cleanup, of all items collected of all 80 countries involved 30% of waste is cigarette butts. In urban areas, it accounts for 24-40% of waste. Environmental toxicity is the most dangerous environmental effects. Substances in cigarettes are heavy metals and carcinogens. Toxic to birds, pets, etc. Animal vet shops see sick pets from butt waste; children eat them not knowing what they are and become very sick. Campaign is an environmental public health campaign.

Filters will not biodegrade, designed not to be. Filters are not a health device – studies in the 90s found that they were cosmetic and designed to allow easier intake of tobacco, particularly for young people. People suck in harder to get a better hit and expose upper organs to chemicals.

Campaign started in 2008, they got their organization up and running, and just a few months ago received status as nonprofit. A study out of San Diego State to study toxicity in fresh and salt water – to look at what happens with smoked butts, with filter, smoked butts, no filter, un-smoked with filter. In 1 liter of water, for smoked butts in one day more than half of species died. Found it was an acutely toxic reaction for all groups of butt waste.

What would it cost to clean up all the butts? Found that it would cost about \$7 million to clean up butts: Averaged to \$.22 per pack and implemented that fee (went down to .20) on packs of cigarettes for that clean up. Tobacco companies are fighting that fee so it has not yet been implemented.

In recent history, there have been several campaigns to make people more aware of butt litter problem. Keep America Beautiful and their campaigns for instance. Butt prevention is also tackling the prevention campaign and thus reduction in smoking in the first place.

### **Policies and concepts:**

‘Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)’ – responsibility throughout the lifecycle of product: manufacture to disposal. Manufacturers should be responsible for post-consumer waste disposal their product creates. Another concept is, ‘Design for the Environment’ – design out toxic materials, banning flavoring in cigarettes, face-to-face deals (no vending machines). Bottle bills are a ‘take back’ approach which requires a return of bottle waste. A similar concept could be applied to butt waste- manufacturers could charge a deposit, take them back, pay consumers (5-10 cents per butt) and then properly dispose of them.

### **Q: Do you have any information about what happens to waste water treatment plants that are inundated with cigarette butts?**

A: It’s a matter of degree and the total amount going to these treatment plants

Comment: Ends up in sludge – Municipalities have been trying to use sludge in agriculture and possibility of having these toxic chemicals end up in fertilizer.

### **Q: Are you not looking at how to make cigarettes less toxic?**

A: There is a concept called ‘Design for the Environment’ which takes that approach, they are focusing on the filters.

Comment: Toxic heavy metals are taken up by tobacco and concentrated in the in the filter making them even more toxic than they already are.

For more information, contact Clif Curtis at [clifton@vardagroup.org](mailto:clifton@vardagroup.org)

### **Additional Resources from Mr. Curtis:**

1. **“The Environmental Burden of Cigarette Butts,”** Tobacco Control Special Supplement (48pp, April 2010), available on line at: [www.legacyforhealth.org/buttoreally](http://www.legacyforhealth.org/buttoreally) on the “Butt Really” campaign

homepage, where there is a link to the full report at the end of the 2nd paragraph of main text on that page, along with numerous other articles/links that address related subjects;

2. **“The Impact of Tobacco on the Environment,”** at [www.Legacyforthehealth.org/3497.aspx](http://www.Legacyforthehealth.org/3497.aspx) (4pp, April 2010), and also available via Legacy’s Butt Really home page, noted in the 1st listing, above;
3. **“Tobacco and the Environment,”** by ASH/Action on Smoking and Health (8 pp., August 2009), UK; and
4. **Cigarette Butt Pollution Project, at [www.cigwaste.org](http://www.cigwaste.org)** , the home page, with its overall goal being to eliminate toxic cigarette butt waste from the environment using science, awareness, and links to other groups working on these issues accessible on that same home page.

**Mayor Goodall’s closing remarks:** If you have a town or county that is looking at getting that fee, make sure that that fee is going back to your project and not getting lost somewhere else.