

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

Policy:

It's Time to Act!

Roundtable Notes

Focus: Regionally and around the country, policies have successfully created incentives for consumers to (1) not use products that have the potential to become litter and (2) dispose of products responsibly. In addition to source reduction or incentive-based policies, other policies also have the potential to solve the litter and illegal dumping problems in the Washington Metropolitan area. An examination of where these policies have been successful in other parts of the country will be necessary.

Moderator: Dr. Abe Haspel, President, Cogent Analysis Group and Board Member for the Alice Ferguson Foundation

Presenters:

- Susan Collins, Executive Director, Container Recycling Institute
- Julie Lawson, Organizer for the Trash Free Maryland and Virginia Alliances

Key Questions:

1. What do we need for legislation or policy that will get us to a trash free Potomac by 2013?
2. What commitments or declarations are people here willing to make?
3. What further research is needed for legislation or policy?

Notes from Roundtable

Abe (Moderator): Introduction

- Reminder about policy working group
- Encourage discussion and inspiration
- Introduce speakers: Susan Collins, Julie Lawson

Susan Collins:

- Beverage container deposit programs (good way to prevent litter)
- Enormous sales growth of beverage containers / recycled amounts have plateaued
 - PET container types increased
 - Solution: mandatory deposit on beverage containers to incr. recycling
 - Why beverage containers?
 - They're consumed "on the go"

- Significant volume
- Large amounts of energy in manufacturing process
- Bottle Bills – requires distributors and retailers to collect min refundable deposit (0.05-0.10 per container avg.)
- Only 10 states in US have bill
- Popular in Canada
- Only 3 states include water bottle deposits: OR, NY and CT
- Bumps in the Road:
 - Industry myths
 - Special interest lobbying
 - Trash haulers
 - Opposing claims:
 - Disproving opposing claims and smoothing out bumps in the road
 - E.g.: Hawaii 60% decrease in litter by implementing deposit bottle bill
 - Cost savings for municipalities when bottle bill implemented
 - Costs – e.g. HI costs to operate 0.01; CA costs 7/10 of a cent
 - www.container-recycling.org; www.bottlebill.org.

Q: Why is there a lag w/ bottle bills and inclusion of water bottles?

A: legislative process takes time

Q: cf. bag bills and bottle bills

A: bottle litter research more sophisticated; bag litter research still new

Q: Is there a cost for beverage industry to recycle?

A: yes. But who should bear the cost?

Julie Lawson:

- Policy working group re-cap: citizens, staff, etc.
- Slides of trash-filled outdoor space
- Montgomery Co., MD e.g.
- DC survey: decreased plastic bag use thanks to the bag bill; \$2m raised for Anacostia River restoration
- DC businesses have been reporting incr. dollar savings from needed to supply less plastic bags to consumers
- Trash Free MD + Trash Free VA (separate but should be unified efforts)
- www.trashfreemaryland.org www.trashfreevirginia.org

Q: Why isn't DC included?

A: already has bag bill but is in nascent stage (still identifying champions)

Q: re: Prince Georges Co, what about uniformity across the state?

A: Uniformity is preferred (cf. CA that has dozens of bag bills) but we take what we can get.

Q: What are key reasons bag bill failed in MD general assembly?

A: Low income population concerns by certain delegates

- Industry friends
- Too many bills on docket to give bag bill due attention (political capital)

Q: What's going on in DC given its small size

A: burgeoning group, regional strategy being considered – VA and MD strategy use as templates/guides

Q: How incentivizing is \$0.05 refund?

- Susan: harder economic times increase importance of deposit to people
- HI bottle bill chart: 2005 – bill implemented. Explanation of data points by Susan, spikes and outliers but should not diminish the effectiveness of bill.
- Global Green USA (Paul Walker): Q: seems like monetary incentives are way to go... why do we still have 40 states that don't have deposit laws? Can we believe recycling rates that manufacturers provide?

- Susan: social behaviors vary place to place, some people will always recycle, some will with \$ incentive, others just will not recycle. There is support in many states at population levels – state officials support is barrier.
- Julie: bag fee vs. bag ban: fees help highlight value + costs of bags traditionally given out for free by businesses. Helps increase transparency and awareness. **Q: Can we go back to the gov't officials who signed trash treaty and ask for help? What's the strategy? i.e. how do we implement the policies?**
- Perhaps we need to focus more on smaller steps before tackling bigger issues?
- Disagreement – taxing paper and plastic bags no good b/c paper can be sequestered in a landfill but plastic is more harmful. No demand for post-consumer plastic.
 - PET bottles statistics presented by Susan as well as other uses for PET bottles – post-consumer demand mostly exported out of US (eg. China). Demand does actually exist and is larger than capacity to reclaim. 7UP bottle in Canada is 100% recyclable.
 - Abe: if recycling can be so valuable, how come a market has not been created to help reclaim? What is another market solution?
 - Susan – A: economies of scale prevent it. No infrastructure to collect largely and efficiently.