



SUMMARY

The Alice Ferguson Foundation's Potomac Watershed Trash Summit

March 16, 2006

At: The World Bank • Washington, DC

Summary of Next Steps for the Region

(Group Action Planning Wrap-Up Session/Reports from Panel Sessions)

► **There's Treasure in Trash: Recycling and Business Opportunities**

1. Litter taxes should be used to pay for public education campaigns.
2. Deposit laws greatly reduce the trash and litter problem and increase the recycling rate. Deposit laws should be explored here.
3. Deposit laws can be creative: in West Virginia, they are working with the concept of private redemption centers to ease the burden placed on retailers.
4. Local government activities all should include recycling.
5. Facilitate connections between jurisdictions with recycling programs and the businesses that want/need the material to manufacture their goods.
6. Consider other economic streams for making products out of trash instead of sending trash to a landfill.

Detailed Panel Session Notes

There's Treasure in Trash: Recycling and Business Opportunities

Synopsis: What is trash's proper place? It's not necessarily the landfill! Panel members will discuss current bottle bill efforts in this region, the economic realities and challenges of recycling, innovative business ideas, fundraising through paper recycling, and how businesses can participate in recycling programs.

Facilitator: *Honorable Penny Gross, Supervisor of Fairfax County*

Panel Members:

- Linda Frame, Program Director, West Virginia Citizen Action
- Pat Franklin, Executive Director, Container Recycling Institute
- John Burke, President, Foodservice and Packaging Institute, Inc.
- Mark Smallwood, My Organic Market (MOM's)
- Paula Reed, Paper Recycling Program, Abitibi, Inc.
- James Ingram, President, Design Recycle, Inc.

► **Presentation by Pat Franklin**

- The value of the trillions of aluminum cans in trash today is more than \$12 billion. Aluminum has hit an all time high recently, but the problem is that one can itself is not worth very much.
- In 2005, 30% of all trash items picked up during local cleanups were plastic beverage bottles.
- In 2004, beverage containers were 28% of all marine debris.
- There are three options for reducing litter:
 - Litter taxes- these don't address the problem at its source, but can help.
 - Education- can do more.
 - Recycling programs- curbside recycling had a huge increase in the early 1990s and then it leveled off.
- Litter reduction HAS happened after the passage of container deposit legislation— government funded studies showed this.
- The higher the incentive for returning bottles, the higher a program's success rate— we have a proven record!

► **Presentation by Linda Frame**

- A lot of people live along the watershed in West Virginia.
- There has been almost unanimous support for the bottle bill.
 - Need incentive to get folks to recycle
- What would happen if West Virginia has a bottle bill focused on job creation?!
 - Privately owned redemption center
 - \$.10/bottle
 - 1 billion containers annually
 - Would be able to hire 400 full-time and 1100 part-time employees
 - Slob-tax— it WOULD be a tax only for those people who don't return their bottles

► **Presentation by John Burke**

- The Foodservice and Packaging Institute, Inc., focuses on single use packaging-- plates, bags, etc.
- The birth of aluminum recycling happened about 25 years ago and is an economic activity.
- If you cannot break even or make a profit, then a business activity is not going to happen. This is true for recycling!
- It is difficult to predict economic cycles- the marketplace and economic environment are very important.
 - The scrap value is \$1500/ton for aluminum right now. The aluminum market will eventually take a dive, but the scrap value is huge right now! This is something that makes a big difference.
 - Is there a market for the material once you have it? This is another important driving force in the economic marketplace that you need to be sensitive about.

► **Presentation by Mark Smallwood**

- My Organic Market (MOM's) has given away 17,500 cloth grocery bags to date. They give \$.10 back per bag for re-use.
- In one community, a guy went around the town and asked stores to leave bottles out for him to collect. In seven years, he raised \$78,000 from bottle bills- he uses this money to fund scholarships for kids.
- We need a paradigm shift for recycling---similar to car seatbelts.
- At MOM's, they take vegetable clippings and brew a compost tea (using worms) for horticultural use- this sells for \$5.99/pound and is a huge success.
- MOM's uses the Montgomery County guidelines at all stores- they recycle 53 percent of all recyclables
 - Batteries, cardboard, paper, packaging peanuts, vegetable clippings.
 - The goal for MOM's Environmental Restoration (ER) program in 2006 is creating a buzz- MOM's hopes to recycle 60 percent of its recyclables in 2006 or 90 percent in 2009. ("60 in '06 or 90 in '09").

► **Presentation by Paula Reed**

- Abitibi is a newsprint producer in Canada with a recycling plant in Texas.
- As a paper producer and retriever, Abitibi is a full-cycle company
- (PAULA SHOWED A DVD): They place paper-retriever bins throughout neighborhoods and collection trucks come to pick them up---the paper is sorted at a center and then made into recycled newsprint.

► **Presentation by James Ingram**

- Recycling is about life!
- Recycling product design- plastic, glass, wood, rubber.
 - Started making recycled products in 1986
 - In Florida alone, there is a \$5 billion industry for recycled plastic hurricane storm boards.

► **Discussion**

- *We need a market for recyclables. What can we do to help create a market in our own counties?*
We can talk to local government officials and ask them to use recycled materials for road building/repair. We need to work with the procurement process of local governments. [John Burke]

Eighty percent of plastic bottles sold and 50 percent of aluminum cans are not recycled. There are companies that WANT the bottles and cans to make products, so the problem is that the infrastructure is not there. Deposits help to create the income for the infrastructure. [Pat Franklin]

- *If you have clean plastic bags of all types, can they all get taken by a recycler?*
Often, they are used to make plastic lumber. And from a science side, yes---most should be recyclable.
- *Why are states not enacting deposit laws?*

Companies such as Coors, Coke, etc., strongly resist---they think people will stop buying the product in the state that has a deposit law. Because of this, they are trying to take a regional approach and get all of the bordering states to do the same, so this excuse cannot be used. Kroegers Grocery Store in West Virginia now sells milk in a glass bottle with a \$1.50 deposit and sales are going through the roof. They just wrote an article on this---it is great for their debate to get West Virginia to pass the bottle bill. [Linda Frame]

- *The cost of transportation is high for recycling---a lot of towns use single-stream-collection (curbside pick-up where everything is collected at once). Does this work?*
This is more of a benefit to the hauler than to the end user of the paper. Glass is a HUGE risk and causes huge expenses if it tears a screen. [Paula Reed]
- *Why are only plastics # 1 and #2 getting recycled?*
Right now, the plastics used for yogurt cups, etc., do not have an end use. It really is all about volume. Right now, PET #1 and #2 or HTP represent 90 percent of all plastic, so it is not as huge of a problem as most people think. [Pat Franklin]