



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)

► **Trash Talk: Student Forum on Trash Awareness**

1. *Stop trash in its tracks!* Make new products out of recycled material • Begin a free bottle refill program like ones in other countries • Make thrift store shopping mainstream and socially acceptable • Minimize or eliminate packaging • Think creatively (e.g. Model lighting technology after the natural light production abilities of lightning bugs).
2. Use *The Golden Rule of Trash*: If you don't want to see other people's trash and litter, don't put it there yourself. (Alternate phrasing: If you don't want to see trash and litter, pick it up!)
3. Education is critical to changing behavior • Radio campaigns work well because you have a captive audience • Every facet of life should be targeted (i.e. put education messages on food and beverage containers) • Tell the truth and do not exaggerate in campaigns • Use celebrities.
4. Enforcement and incentives need to be used to persuade people to put their trash in the right place. Give offenders community service hours of picking up litter. Enforce the current anti-litter laws more.

Detailed Panel Session Notes

Trash Talk: Student Forum on Trash Awareness

Synopsis: Youth offer a unique and integral perspective on the many issues surrounding the trash and litter problem. Students will give feedback and brainstorm on anti-litter campaigns, incentives, and disincentives for putting trash in the proper place and will identify creative solutions they see for creating a Trash Free Potomac by 2013.

Facilitators: *Alice Ferguson Foundation Staff: Libby Campbell, Program Director; Suzanne Kenney, Program Assistant; Karen Miles, Program Director; Rebecca Scott, Educator*

Participating Schools:

- Georgetown Day School, District of Columbia

- J.C. Parks Elementary, Charles County, Maryland
- John Hanson Montessori, Prince George's County, Maryland
- Langley High, Fairfax County, Virginia
- Poolesville High School, Montgomery County, Maryland

► **What Is the Problem with Trash?**

- *How does trash affect the environment?*
Hurts animals and the environment • Leads to environmental indifference • Ruins views/is disgusting to look at • Contaminates the soil and ground water (aquifers) • Creates health issues • Kills aquatic life • Takes up too much space
- *How does trash affect you personally?*
Creates dangerous playing conditions • Makes water unfit for recreation • Causes economic decline in tourism and real estate/land values (nobody wants to shop at a dirty store, nobody wants to live and play in a dirty area) • Destroys neighborhood pride • Makes playgrounds unsafe for kids because of glass • Can pop tires (glass)
- *What do you think will be done with trash in the future?*
Landfills are bad because they take up space and are hard to site because of Not In My BackYard (NIMBY) concerns • Recycling is not completely efficient • Cradle to cradle concepts are needed • Trash will affect our food supply by contaminating the soil • Recreation such as swimming will be ruined • 20 years in the future, we want the same privileges adults have now • We want healthy lives • We want fun fishing (healthy fishing)
- *Why do people litter?*
Teenagers and adults can be careless • People don't realize the impacts of littering • Kids see bad examples in their parents • There is a lack of awareness; people need more lessons in not polluting • People don't believe the consequences are real, or they just don't care (ignorance is bliss)
- *Encouraging youth*
A tiny act can affect kids tremendously later (even small messages can be effective)

► **Design an Anti-trash Ad Campaign for the Potomac River Watershed**

- *What can we use as a medium for getting the message out there?*
Show TV characters recycling during the show • Use radio—teens love to drive and listen • Print messages on food containers/wrappers, on the food itself, or inside food (i.e. fortune cookies) • Sell novelty plants with messages that show when the flowers bloom • Put ads in movie theaters during the previews • Develop Internet frame ads • Use skywriting • Put watermarks on paper that say “Please recycle me” • Make audio toys with trash-free messages • Show students videos in which skateparks, sports fields, and movie theaters are trashed •

Advertise in teen magazines • Put ads on the sides of buses • Use newspapers, flyers and school media

- *What message do we want to send (what will youth pay attention to)?*
Show shocking real-world comparisons • Show pollution progression over time • Use youth pop culture humor • Put up signs that say “Trash can ahead” • Be positive! Leave hope! • Use a humorous message that sticks in the mind • Show landfills next to homes, “this is the future” • Show fish that were killed by toxins/heavy metals, “this is our food” • Put people on a guilt trip, “this is what your habits are doing to our environment”
- *What kind of ad styles should be used?*
Develop songs about recycling • Use reliable sources and hard scientific facts • Be realistic • Use MTV Cribs • Develop talking toys with an anti-trash message
- *What types of spokespersons would be effective?*
Singers • Spongebob • Older peers (from the next age group up from the target audience) • Olympic athletes • Trash Summit participants/school kids • People who actually care and live by their words like Jane Goodall • People of the same age as the target audience (easier to relate to) • Celebrities who recycle • Action figures

► **Post-Consumer Trash**

- *Why do people litter in the Potomac River watershed?*
Think it’s inconvenient to take the time to throw away trash • Have incorrect parental/teacher behavior as an example • Don’t see the immediate impact • Have no financial or tax incentive not to litter or burdens if caught littering • See a lack of enforcement • Have the “out of sight, out of mind” mentality • Are ignorant about how it affects us/have a lack of education • Have the mentality that just one little thing thrown out the window isn’t going to affect the earth that much • Can’t find trash cans or disposal facilities nearby • Are just plain mean and want to harm the environment
- *Why do people NOT litter?*
Learn through programs such as recycling in your school, which heightens awareness • Watch documentaries • Observe the effects of trash, and don’t want to litter • Learn by example • Learn to protect the environment through community service projects • Don’t want to harm the environment or deplete natural resources • Are educated about the impacts trash/toxins can wreak on an environment

► **Pre-Consumer Trash – Rethinking the Way Things are Made/Designed**

- *How can we recycle better?*
Recycle tires by chopping them up and turning them into mulch or using them as an impervious surface instead of pavement • Develop ways to make rechargeable batteries more affordable and easier to use • Go back to glass bottles and have stores refill bottles when needed, instead of making and buying all new ones • Use plastic trays in school cafeterias instead of Styrofoam • Use silverware and

glass in schools instead of paper/plastic • Recycle clothing and other products by encouraging donations and purchase of clothes/products at thrift stores • Recycle ink cartridges (some stores offer rebates for turning in used cartridges) • Rethink our marketing: make ads more eco-friendly and change the consumers' attitudes from "must have newer, better, more improved" to encouraging longer-lasting products that do not need to be replaced • Charge a fee for choosing plastic bags at grocery stores • Use cloth bags instead of paper or plastic • Make it mandatory to recycle • Put recycling bins in more areas throughout the cities and make them connected to/next to regular garbage cans

- *What products can we remake to enforce the cradle to cradle concept set forth by William McDonough?*

Instead of manufacturing cars for transportation, develop a better transportation system for cities and urban areas • Get more metro-rails and buses • Develop incentives for biking to work • Use more bio-diesel engines in cars • Learn more about bio-mimicry (e.g. tap into the mechanism that a firefly uses to make light) • Use the kinetic energy from your muscles to power a car along with solar energy • Package our products with biodegradable material (i.e. use packing peanuts that are made from starch) • Use inks made from soy • Make clothes/products out of organic materials that will not pollute the air when they are burned • Have more textbooks, lessons, and homework online instead of using paper to print all the information out • Make more "green" homes: use materials that are biodegradable, use recycled materials, and power the homes with solar energy