



## *Business Solutions for Plastic Pollution*



The 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Potomac Watershed Trash Summit was held on Tuesday October 16<sup>th</sup>, 2018 at George Mason University’s Arlington Campus. This year’s theme, *Business Solutions for Plastic Pollution*, highlighted private sector leadership on source reduction, litter prevention and community cleanup. The agenda included a keynote speaker, a business panel, lunchtime updates from local jurisdictions and roundtable discussions. Below are summaries of each agenda item, key discussion points, and action items.

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## Welcome Remarks

10:00am – 10:15am

**Summary:** The event began with welcoming remarks from co-hosts, the Alice Ferguson Foundation and George Mason University. By highlighting the history of the summit, themes for this year's summit and thank key partners, the welcoming remarks set the stage for the rest of the summit.

### Speakers:

- Lori Arguelles, President and CEO, Alice Ferguson Foundation
- Dann Sklarew, Associate Professor, George Mason University

### Key Discussion Points:

- Twelve year history of the summit, from the signing of the Trash Treaty to today.
- Businesses have a key role to play in plastic pollution prevention. In the last few years, green businesses leaders have quietly mobilized around source reduction policies.
- Summit is back in Northern Virginia for the first time in nearly seven years. Local and state leaders in Virginia are increasingly concerned about plastic pollution.

### Action Items:

- Partnerships with local and regional businesses are key to successful source reduction solutions.
- Collaboration throughout Northern Virginia is needed to address plastic pollution.

## Keynote Address

10:15am – 11:00am

**Summary:** As You Sow works directly with executive leadership of publically traded companies to advocate for sustainable packaging, increased recycling and other proven source reduction strategies. By leveraging shareholder proposals and proxy voting, As You Sow has successfully engaged Coca-Cola, Colgate-Palmolive, PepsiCo, Procter & Gamble and others. The keynote speaker highlighted how to successfully partner with businesses and summarized key trends among national and international businesses.

### Speaker:

- Conrad MacKerron, Senior Vice President, As You Sow



**Figure 1.** Conrad MacKerron, Senior Vice President at As You Sow gives keynote address.

### Key Discussion Points:

- Shareholder advocacy can be used to make the business case for sustainable packaging.
- Extended Produce Responsibility (EPR) shifts responsibility for collection and recycling of post-consumer packaging from taxpayers and governments to producers.
- Huge gaps in recycling rates partially related to lack of investment in curbside collection. Who should pay for this?
- Increase in use of non-recyclable packaging (pouches and other ‘flexibles’).
- Create closed loop production systems through fundamental redesign of products, radically improved economics of reuse and significant improvements in recycling systems.
- Source reduction and recycling commitments from Colgate-Palmolive, Procter & Gamble, KraftHeinz, Unilever, McDonald’s, Starbucks and Walmart via Plastic Solutions Investor Alliance.

### Action Items:

- Companies need to look beyond their own narrow product impact and start thinking on a systems level. Producer responsibility for plastic pollution would incentivize redesign of packaging for increased recyclability, provide needed investment for curbside collection and build domestic recycling markets.
- We need culture change around single use plastics, including switching to reusable products and/or alternative materials.

### Business Panel

11:00am – 12:00pm



**Figure 2.** Panelists discuss opportunities and challenges for plastic pollution reduction during the business panel. From left, Tom Spreche, Denise Naguib, Dan Simons and Andy Shallah.

**Summary:** Local and regional businesses are leaders in source reduction strategies, but face challenges in implementation. The business panel dove into benefits and barriers for businesses looking to reduce their use of plastics, review lessons learned from current efforts, explore opportunities for collaboration and highlight potential future directions.

### Speakers:

- Michael Berger, Founding Partner and VP of Supply Chain, Elevation Burger
- Denise Naguib, Vice President of Sustainability, Marriott International
- Dan Simons, Co-Owner, Farmers Restaurant Group

- Tom Sprehe, Senior Vice President, KCI Technologies
- Andy Shallah, CEO, Busboys and Poets

### Key Discussion Points:

- Need to balance environmental actions with profitability. However, investment in green practices can pay off in customer loyalty and beautification of communities and waterways.
- Education of consumers is important to explain changes and influence consumer preferences. Need customer buy-in and support. Convenience is still a huge driver of plastic pollution.
- Significant cost efficiency of source reduction and point source collection relative to cleanup of rivers and oceans.
- Government has an important role to play in encouraging innovation. Legislation and regulation that supports alternative products can help businesses make changes.

### Action Items:

- Collectively, we need to capitalize on momentum around plastic straws to draw attention to other single use plastics (i.e. plastic bottles).
- Businesses need to educate consumers to foster preferences for alternative products.
- Governments need to pass legislation and implement regulations that support businesses seeking to move away from single use plastics.

## Lunchtime Updates from Jurisdictions

12:00pm – 1:15pm

**Summary:** The annual trash summit provides a valuable opportunity to check on progress in local and state governments around litter prevention strategies including education, policy, regulation, enforcement and market-based solutions.



**Figure 3.** Senator Scott Surovell gives an update on source reduction policy at the state level in Virginia during the lunchtime plenary.

### Speakers:

- Senator Scott Surovell, Commonwealth of Virginia
- Director Chris Shorter, District Department of Public Works
- Director Adam Ortiz, Prince George’s County Department of Environment
- Director Tommy Wells, District Department of Energy and Environment
- Acting Director Patrice Bubar, Montgomery County’s Department of Environmental Protection



## Key Discussion Points:

- Virginia State Senate
  - Stream cleanups bring awareness to the issue, particularly the disproportionate impact on low income communities.
  - Strong interest in local control of source reduction regulations (i.e. plastic bag fee)
- District Department of Public Works (DPW)
  - Street sweeping removed 4,361 tons of litter from DC streets
  - DPW is aiming for 80% waste diversion
  - Progress toward a DC composting facility and curbside composting
- Prince George’s County Department of Environment
  - Goal is to provide resources to communities that can engage their fellow neighbors in litter prevention
  - Key successes include PGCLitterTRAK app, new in-stream trash trap, big belly trash cans, key source reduction including ban on Styrofoam, curbside recycling composting
  - Need to consider source reduction regulation around plastic bags
- District Department of Energy and Environment:
  - Single use containers account for 40 – 60% of litter collected in trash traps
  - High compliance (88%) around Styrofoam ban and plastic bag fee. Moving towards enforcement of straw ban.
  - Next big challenge is plastic bottles.
- Montgomery County’s Department of Environmental Protection
  - Evaluating impact of legislation: bag fee and Styrofoam ban
  - Zero waste goal: focus on increased recycling through enhanced communication
  - Ongoing monitoring of trash in Anacostia and evaluating TMDL progress

## Action Items:

- Local control of source reduction regulations would open the door for plastic bag fees in Northern Virginia.
- Legislation addressing plastic bottle pollution is needed in the District.
- Prince George’s County needs to consider a source reduction policy for plastic bags.



**Figure 4.** During the lunchtime plenary, local jurisdictions provided updates on litter prevention and cleanup efforts. From left, Director Adam Ortiz, Acting Director Patrice Bubar and Director Tommy Wells.

## Roundtable Discussions

1:15pm – 2:15pm and 2:30pm – 3:30pm

**Title:** The Alignment of Mission & Business Operations at the National Aquarium

**Speaker:** Laura Bankey, National Aquarium

**Summary:** As part of its continued commitment to sustainability and ocean conservation, the National Aquarium has eliminated all single-use plastic foodware in its building. Working closely with on-site partners Sodexo, the Classic Catering People, Pepsi and others, alternatives to single-use plastic were identified and incorporated into building operations. Attendees heard about how to have the RIGHT conversations with vendors that lead towards sustainability and have real impact.

**Title:** The Ins and Outs of Reducing Restaurant Waste

**Speakers:** Julie Lawson, Mayor's Office of the Clean City and Natalie Avery, DC BID Council

**Summary:** Reducing and managing trash in food businesses is more than just cutting back on packaging or using alternatives to plastic. Discussion focused on other considerations businesses face in kitchen design, staffing, and hauling, barriers to change, and how local jurisdictions can make it easier for businesses to achieve their waste reduction goals.

**Title:** Trash in Court: Challenging the Anacostia TMDL

**Speaker:** Becky Hammer, Natural Resources Defense Council

**Summary:** Earlier this year, a federal court found that the total maximum daily load (TMDL) for trash in the Anacostia River violated the Clean Water Act. In this roundtable, attendees learned about the advocacy strategy that led up to this ruling, as well as a layman's explanation of what the court's decision means.



**Figure 5.** Roundtable discussions focused on specific steps that businesses, jurisdictions, nonprofits and community members can take to reduce plastic pollution.

**Title:** We Search the Research: Microplastics in the Potomac and its Tributaries

**Speakers:** Doreen Peters, George Mason University & AECOM and Matt Robinson, DC Department of Energy and Environment

**Summary:** In this roundtable, experts discussed microplastics (i.e., plastic pieces less than 5 millimeters in size) in the Potomac River and its tributaries. Attendees looked at current research efforts and considered the effects and actions that may be taken to address this issue.

**Title:** Engaging the Community in Reducing Their Plastic Footprint

**Speakers:** Elenor Hodges, EcoAction Arlington and Gareth Lewis, Sekoyia

**Summary:** The Plastic Free Challenge is a campaign engaging local residents in reducing their use of plastic to protect our waterways and wildlife. Attendees discussed the campaign's messaging, how

the organizers leveraged partnerships to increase engagement, methods for encouraging behavior change, and the use of social media to show collective impact.

**Title:** MOM's Organic Market a Recycling Powerhouse

**Speaker:** Alexandra DySard, MOM's Organic Market

**Summary:** Attendees learned about the journey MOM's Organic Market has taken to become the recycling powerhouse and sustainable business leader it is today. From banning plastic bags and plastic water bottles, to allowing customers to bring in over a dozen hard to recycle items from home for recycling (including food waste!). MOM's works with environmental leaders, non profits, manufacturers, and municipalities to strengthen their in-house recycling programs and advocate for better material management practices in their communities.

**Title:** Change is Brewing: Creative Partnerships for Cleaner Communities & Water

**Speaker:** Claire Jordan, Trash Free Maryland

**Summary:** Get trashed with Trash Free Maryland - the leading advocate for public policies and initiatives to reduce trash pollution in the state. Attendees learned about TFM's recent collaborations with local breweries and nonprofits to keep Baltimore and its waterways cleaner. More and more businesses are working to minimize their environmental impact while maximizing investment in the communities where they operate. Attendees explored about how unique partnerships can raise visibility and awareness and drive systems change by re-framing messages and broadening your audience, and hear about the genesis of this partnership, its forecast for the future, and the way it ultimately supports policy progress and behavior change.

**Title:** Stop Sucking: Waste Reduction in Restaurants

**Speaker:** Erin Chalkley, Farmers Restaurant Group

**Summary:** This discussion focused on the methods and challenges for reducing single use disposables in the restaurant environment. Specific topics included how to identify sources of waste, how to reduce the use of single use disposables, and how to identify cost savings through source reduction techniques. Attendees also examined present and future waste diversion techniques, the benefits of waste audits, and how to get staff and customers on board. Farmers Restaurant Group recently launched the Our Last Straw campaign to address single-use plastics and reduce plastic pollution, starting right here in and around our U.S. capital.



**Figure 6.** Roundtable discussions were a valuable opportunity to consider lessons learned, explore future directions and foster collaboration across jurisdictions and sectors.

**Title:** Regional Business Solutions That Help Curb the Tide of Solid Waste

**Speakers:** Phil Bresee, Arlington County and Harvey Gershman, Gershman, Brickner & Bratton, Inc.

**Summary:** Views from the Private and Public Sectors – attendees joined a conversation with two experienced and creative professionals in the recycling industry on both sides of public/private table about the types of businesses and strategies to help our region be more resilient, add value to the resource management chain, and promote environmentally sustainable waste management.



**Title:** Partnerships for a Clean Capitol Hill

**Speakers:** Alan Chargin, Fulcrum Properties Group and Denise Krepp, ANC6B10 Commissioner

**Summary:** Attendees learned how businesses, community members and local government officials came together to mobilize litter prevention and cleanup activities in the Capitol Hill neighborhood of Washington DC. Attendees explored how to replicate this success in other communities by discussing challenges, lessons learned and future directions.

## Potomac Champion Awards

3:30pm – 3:45pm

**Summary:** In recognition of their efforts to prevent litter and cleanup local waterways, the following institutions were recognized as 2018 Potomac Champions:

- [Washington Metropolitan Chapter Community Association Institute \(WMCCAI\)](#)– Co-hosted a cleanup site leader training with the Alice Ferguson Foundation that trained 15 new cleanup site leaders. In 2018, they organized 8 cleanups that engaged more than 100 volunteers and removed more than 3,600 pounds of trash from the Potomac Watershed. Elisabeth Kirk and Jamie Barnhart accepted the award on behalf of WMCCAI.
- [Congress Heights Community Development and Training Corporation \(CHCDTC\)](#)– In collaboration with the Regional Litter Prevention Campaign, CHCDTC distributed more than 100 yard signs. As part of the Annual Potomac Watershed Cleanup, CHCDTC organized 3 cleanups that removed nearly 3,000 pounds of trash from Congress Heights. Baldin Needham and Monica Ray accepted the award on behalf of CHCDTC.
- [CF Alliance Insurance Services](#) – CF Alliance leadership have led a Potomac Watershed Cleanup in Montgomery County for more than seven years. During that time, they have worked with more than 100 volunteers to remove nearly 4,000 pounds of trash from communities and waterways. Marie-Tess Fitzpatrick accepted the award on behalf of CF Alliance.



**Figure 7.** From top, the Washington Metropolitan Chapter of the Community Association Institute, the Congress Heights and Community Development and Training Corporation and CF Alliance Insurance Services were awarded as 2018 Potomac Champions.



## **Closing Remarks**

3:45pm – 4:00pm

**Summary:** The event ended with closing remarks from the Alice Ferguson Foundation and a representative from District of Columbia Councilmember Mary Cheh's office. By reviewing previous source reduction successes and highlighting potential future directions, the closing remarks summarized the event and challenged attendees to partner across sectors to implement proven source reduction solutions.

### **Speakers:**

- Rachel Clark, Office of Councilmember Mary Cheh, District of Columbia
- Lori Arguelles, President and CEO, Alice Ferguson Foundation

### **Key Discussion Points:**

- Multinational corporations are rethinking plastics on a global scale. Local and regional businesses are creating movements away from single use plastics.
- In partnership with nonprofits and community members, local jurisdictions continue to implement innovative litter prevention and cleanup strategies.
- Source reduction legislation, including plastic bag fees and Styrofoam bans, have been essential in reducing plastic pollution.

### **Action Items:**

- Councilmember Cheh will consider source reduction legislation on plastic bottles.
- Businesses have a keen interest in plastic pollution and governments and nonprofits need to partner with them more.