

# Washington Citizens for Resource Conservation 2009 Program Highlights

## Success Story:

### Producers responsible for recycling TVs & computers



In 2006, after many years of strategic and tenacious work, WCRC helped pass one of the strongest electronics recycling laws in the country. Now, three years later, there's E-Cycle Washington. In the first 11 months of this landmark recycling program, over 35 million pounds of old computers, monitors and TVs have been collected from residents, schools and small businesses throughout the state. That's about 2,200 units each and every day! And it's all paid for by the producers who make the computers and TVs. The producers are using only recyclers who meet "preferred standards" developed by the Department of Ecology, which helps keep our toxic electronic waste from being shipped to developing countries. So far, an estimated 2 million pounds of lead have been responsibly managed rather than ending up in landfills or incinerators.

### 34,000 Pounds of Medicines Collected

WCRC collaborated with a diverse coalition on a pilot project to securely take back unwanted and expired household medicines at 25 Group Health Cooperative pharmacies and 12 select Bartell Drugs



locations in Washington. Although the pilot has now officially ended, Group Health Cooperative and Bartell Drugs are continuing to provide the program as a public service. About 34,000 pounds of medicines (in original containers) have been collected since the end of 2006. It's clear that demand for a safe way to dispose of unwanted medicines is high! These medicines will not contaminate our waterways, cause an accidental poisoning death, or be used illicitly by a teenager. A final report on the pilot will be released soon.

### Preventing Waste Medicines

In addition to our efforts to securely dispose of unwanted medicines, WCRC is asking, "How can we reduce the amount of waste medicines that gets created in the first place"?

We worked with health care providers to develop both long-term and immediate strategies and to educate on how to reduce medicine waste from households. One example of a strategy is insurance providers promoting starter packs of small quantities of medicine for certain new treatments, which could cut down on the economic and environmental costs from wasted drugs. WCRC developed web pages and a first-of-its-kind brochure on reducing waste medicines, submitted articles for online and print publications, and presented information to 65 health care providers. Through participation on a national source reduction workgroup, we helped develop the possibility of a national summit that would bring together key stakeholders to encourage waste reduction solutions.



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## Recycling fluorescent lights



Switching to energy efficient fluorescent lighting is an important step in conserving energy and reducing greenhouse gases.

However, each fluorescent bulb and tube contains a small amount of mercury, a potent neurotoxin that needs special handling when discarded. WCRC partnered with Pierce County and Tacoma to launch a “Take it Back Network” for fluorescent lights, modeled off an existing program in King County. The network is made up of retailers that provide residents with opportunities to responsibly recycle these mercury-containing lights. WCRC also encouraged retailers to stock less toxic and longer-lasting lights and produced a document on greener lighting alternatives. In a separate project, WCRC developed and distributed a summary of results to date of a national dialogue on fluorescent lights, in which we continue to participate.

## New Outreach Campaign

WCRC is kicking off a strategic outreach campaign to spread the word about producer responsibility and build citizen interest. We are reaching out to residents and influential individuals, asking them to tell us about their experiences with E-Cycle Washington and requesting new actions – like signing on to support producer responsibility principles. Stay tuned for lots more on this campaign!

## 2009 Legislation

Ongoing sustainable take-back programs will need ongoing sustainable funding. That’s why WCRC advocated for two cutting-edge producer responsibility bills this year. The *Secure Medicine Return bill* requires drug producers to provide and pay for the secure collection and disposal of unwanted medicines from households. The bill was endorsed by over 50 diverse groups, but it was fiercely opposed by drug companies and did not pass this year. The *Recycling Act for Mercury-Containing Lights* creates a producer-provided recycling program for lights such as compact fluorescent bulbs. This bill also did not pass, but the legislature asked Department of Ecology to solicit input and develop recommendations for a mercury-containing lighting recycling program. WCRC was at the table during the advisory process, and we also spearheaded a letter from 18 environmental groups that supports a producer responsibility approach. The result was an Ecology recommendation to the legislature for a producer -provided recycling program for mercury-containing lights! WCRC continued to work on both medicines and lighting throughout 2009 – and we’ll be back in Olympia in 2010.



## Evaluating Rechargeable Battery Recycling

The Rechargeable Battery Recycling Corporation (RBRC) offers a manufacturer-funded program for collecting and recycling rechargeable batteries and cell phones. WCRC evaluated their in-store program in Washington, using a “secret shopper” approach to gather information. The study resulted in useful findings that allowed WCRC to provide RBRC with recommendations for improving the program.



### Your Voice for Zero Waste

WCRC continued to represent citizens on the State Solid Waste Advisory Committee and the King County Solid Waste Advisory Committee. As part of these activities, we advocated for strong recycling goals and support for producer responsibility in King County’s recently released Draft Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Plan.