

People Taking Action: Creating a Mandate for Producer Responsibility

We've taken some big steps toward shifting responsibility for recycling from budget-constrained local governments to the corporations that make and profit from the products. But the key to future success is public support! That's why Zero Waste Washington implemented a strategic outreach campaign to spread the word about producer responsibility and ask residents to take action. We've developed compelling educational materials and communicated with several thousand people, especially reaching out to moms and young adults. Over 650 individuals including a number of influential community leaders became proponents of producer responsibility by signing our Call for Producer Responsibility, signing postcards asking desktop printer manufacturers to offer free and convenient take-back of printers, and/or taking another action or committing to take action. The full Call for Producer Responsibility and the postcards can be found on our website and are a great way to take a first step in support of this growing movement.



Producer Responsibility for Fluorescent Lights

In 2010, Zero Waste Washington successfully advocated for a second-in-the-nation recycling law for mercury-containing lights such as compact fluorescent bulbs and tubes. But that's just the beginning of the story. Now, we are working to ensure that the producer-funded program will live up to its intent. Zero Waste Washington provided comments on product stewardship plan content guidelines developed by the Department of Ecology. And we're actively participating in the rulemaking process which is addressing such critical issues as funding, convenient collection, performance standards, and public outreach. The landmark producer-funded program for fluorescent lights must be implemented by 2013.

Building on E-Cycle Washington's Success



The producer-provided E-Cycle Washington program has been wildly successful! Wherever you live in Washington, you can recycle your computers, monitors, and televisions. Zero Waste Washington fought hard for this program and, as a result, 112 million pounds of electronics have been recycled since 2009 with over 8.5 million pounds of lead

kept out of landfills and incinerators. Now we are working to build on this success by expanding producer responsibility to include desktop printers and other peripherals such as keyboards, scanners and DVD players. In 2011, we launched a postcard campaign asking HP and Canon – the two biggest printer manufacturers in the U.S. – to provide free and convenient recycling programs for desktop printers. We strategized with non-profit organizations in other states to create this campaign. We also supported a bill to expand the E-Cycle Washington program to include printers and other peripherals. Although it didn't pass this year, we'll be back fighting for this expansion during the 2012 legislative session.

2011 Legislation

The 2011 legislative session saw the introduction of a growing number of producer responsibility bills. Zero Waste Washington supported bills covering carpet, unwanted medicines, and an expansion of the electronics producer responsibility law. Discarded carpet can be recycled into carpet backing and carpet fiber – but the recycling rate for carpet is only 2%. Up to a third of household medicines go unused, and we want to make sure that they don't end up contaminating our waterways. While none of these bills passed, each of them moved forward and we expect them to be considered again in 2012. We've also been involved in discussions about potential producer responsibility bills for rechargeable batteries and paint. In these challenging economic times, producer responsibility policy can move us closer to zero waste while being budget neutral to the state.



Zero Waste Washington continues to join with 25 leading environmental groups that work together to establish and pass several legislative priorities each year. The 2011 environmental priorities included the Coal-Free Future for Washington Act, legislation to reduce phosphorous pollution from fertilizer (which both passed), and the Clean Water Jobs Act (which did not).

Growing our capacity

A few months ago, we received exciting news! The Bullitt Foundation will match all new donations and increases to donations to Zero Waste Washington till September 2012 up to \$15,000. This challenge grant will go to hiring a managing director who will focus on fundraising and organizational development, allowing existing staff to spend more of their time on programs that get us closer to zero waste. Last year, Zero Waste Washington's Board identified bringing on a managing director as a key step to increasing our capacity. Now, with the Bullitt Foundation challenge grant, a pathway has opened up to make it happen!



The staff expansion is part of a longer-term capacity building plan. It started in 2010 with a name change and new website that have dramatically increased our visibility and our ability to reach more people. We've developed an internship program to expand our team. And we are working to grow our board in preparation for a strategic visioning and program planning process. By putting energy into the health of our organization, we're building our capacity to make an even bigger difference.

Your Voice for Zero Waste

Zero Waste Washington continued to represent the public on the State Waste 2 Resources Advisory Committee, which addresses recycling and waste reduction issues that are pertinent statewide, and was active on a subcommittee on solid waste financing. We also participated on the King County Solid Waste Advisory Committee. Zero Waste Washington collaborated on various projects with the Northwest Product Stewardship Council and participated on the Electronics TakeBack Coalition's Policy Committee.