

## Zero Waste Washington 2018 Year in Review



### WASHINGTON STATE PASSED FIRST SAFE MEDICINE TAKE-BACK IN THE US

Zero Waste Washington led a coalition of medical, law enforcement, and municipal partners in securing statewide safe medicine take-back legislation. And with strong leadership by champion Representative Strom Peterson, it passed with bipartisan support. This cutting-edge policy requires drug manufacturers to provide and pay for a convenient take-back program for unwanted over-the-counter and prescription medicines. Medicines disposed of in a secure take-back program will not be abused, contribute to an accidental poisoning, nor pollute our waterways. Washington was the first in the nation to require safe medicine return and the program is serving as a national model. Our 2019

producer responsibility efforts include two proposed bills: paint stewardship and plastic packaging stewardship.

### COMMUNITIES ACROSS THE STATE SAY FAREWELL TO PLASTIC

Dozens of volunteers and community members across the state are partnering with Zero Waste Washington to legislate plastic bags and styrofoam food serviceware out of their communities. To date, there are 23 reusable bag ordinances and six food serviceware ordinances in place in Washington. Plus, we are working with an additional 25 communities on pending ordinances. Think it's time to go statewide?! So do we! Stayed tuned for more in 2019.



### KICKING OFF A PLASTICS LITTER ASSESSMENT COLLABORATIVE

From plastic single-use food serviceware, new flexible packaging and low value plastics in the recycling stream to marine debris and micro plastics, plastics are everywhere, and their impacts and management are a growing concern. One of the best ways to reduce this problem is to gain a pollutant designation under the federal Clean Water Act, and so Zero Waste Washington has initiated a project to do just that! In partnership with EPA and many, many local nonprofit and community groups, we are working to quantify the load and sources of plastics and other litter in local freshwater and stormwater sources feeding into our lakes, Puget Sound, and ocean. We are testing a new protocol which will roll out nationally in the next year.

### WOW, WHAT A WASTE! TEXTILES!

We don't think about textile waste that often; it is kind of a silent form of waste. It doesn't get the media attention of other materials, such as plastic and metal. But with the rise of "fast fashion," there are estimates that the average American throws away about 81 pounds of clothing every year – to the landfill. To help shine a spotlight on this waste,



we partnered with the Washington State Recycling Association (WSRA) in October to host a textile waste forum called *The Shirt Off Your Back – The State of Textile Recycling, Reuse, and Repair Today*. The speakers were a wonderful blend of waste and consumer behavior researchers and designers and companies innovating to reduce textile waste in different ways. And board member Hannah Johnson made it a zero waste event! The next step is to build a plan to take action to tackle textile waste. Send us your ideas!

### GETTING PFAS – THE TEFLON CHEMICAL – OUT OF FOOD SERVICWARE

Perfluorinated compounds (PFAS) are fluorine-containing chemicals which make materials stain- and stick-resistant and are used in food serviceware, such as paper plates, clamshells, and other products such as camping gear, textiles and carpets. Unfortunately, PFAS are persistent chemicals and cause human health problems. After conducting a study that identified PFAS in our commercial compost, Zero Waste Washington helped pass first-in-the-nation legislation protecting Washington families from further contamination.



### FIX-IT FAIRS IN TACOMA

In partnership with the Tacoma Tool Library, Tacoma Housing Authority, Centro Latino, and others, we launched a series of "Fix-it Fairs" to repair "broken" household items and keep them out of the landfill. Residents bring items ranging from small appliances to torn blue

jeans to the event to be repaired by volunteer fixers and extend their useful life. We are working for a norm shift away from "it's broken, let's toss it."