



# WASTE NOT

WASHINGTON CITIZENS FOR RESOURCE CONSERVATION

FALL 2004

## RECOMMENDATIONS to SOLVE E-WASTE PROBLEM

By December 2005, the Department of Ecology must submit recommendations to the legislature for implementing and financing statewide recycling of obsolete computers and TVs. These recommendations are required by H.B. 2488, which passed the state legislature last February with broad support. WCRC played a leadership role in bringing that legislation to fruition.

As it studies the e-waste issue, Ecology is consulting with electronics manufacturers, local governments, environmental organizations, and others. Advisory and technical committees have been formed. WCRC and our ally WashPIRG are participating on the advisory group.

At the heart of this issue is how electronics recycling will be financed. This is made all the more challenging because computers and TVs contain lead, mercury, brominated flame retardants, and other hazardous substances. One financing option – supported by WCRC – would require electronics manufacturers to pay to recycle the products they sell. This creates a financial incentive for manufacturers to design products that are less toxic and easier to recycle.

Called “extended producer responsibility,” this approach is being implemented in Japan, Europe, Taiwan and elsewhere. Last year, Maine became the first U.S. state to enact legislation that holds electronics manufacturers responsible for financing recycling

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## Take It Back Networks: Governments and Businesses Partner Up

Residents frequently ask local governments what they can do with their obsolete computers and TVs.

King and Snohomish Counties have developed a solution today, one that won't hinder a transition to manufacturer responsibility tomorrow. These jurisdictions are partnering with retailers, recyclers, non-profits, repair shops and even a computer network services company, all of which take back certain electronics for reuse or recycling. As an interim program to a statewide or national system financed by manufacturers, the businesses charge an end-of-life fee for the collection and processing of the products. Both Counties require that certain standards for responsible recycling are met prior to admittance into the network. Further information can be found at

[www.co.snohomish.wa.us/takeitback](http://www.co.snohomish.wa.us/takeitback) and [www.metrokc.gov/dnrp/swd/electronics](http://www.metrokc.gov/dnrp/swd/electronics).

In 2003, the Take It Back Networks collected about 13,000 computers, monitors, and TVs in Snohomish County and 48,000 in King County. WCRC would like to see this successful program expanded to underserved parts of the State. Todd Carey of WCRC is offering to work with jurisdictions and retailers to develop programs based on the “Take It Back” approach. WCRC's effort is being financed by a grant from the Department of Ecology.

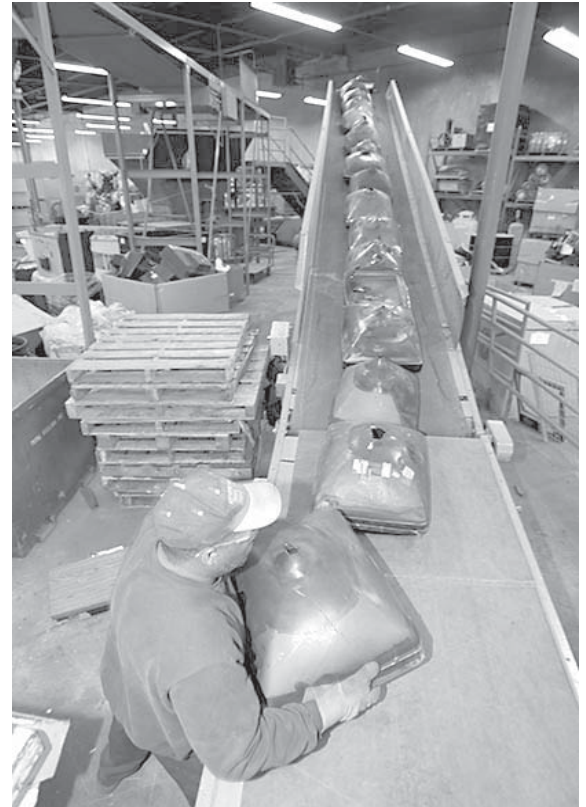


Photo courtesy of King County Solid Waste Division

*TVs being recycled at Total Reclaim, a member of the Take It Back Network.*

## BOARD MEMBERS WANTED

Interested in working with a knowledgeable, creative bunch of people who are supporting cutting-edge environmental projects? Consider joining WCRC's Board of Directors. We are especially looking for a board treasurer as well as members with interest in policy work or fundraising.

FOR INFORMATION, CONTACT SUELLEN MELE AT  
[suellen@wastenotwashington.org](mailto:suellen@wastenotwashington.org).

## NOTEWORTHY

### *Gearing up for Legislative Session*

As the State's 2005 legislative session approaches, Washington's environmental community has announced its priorities:

- **Clean Cars**
- **Green Building**
- **Sound Solutions: Saving Hood Canal and Puget Sound**
- **Ban Toxic Flame Retardants**

In addition, the environmental community will oppose any attempts to weaken or rollback existing environmental protections or laws. This is the third year that many environmental groups in Washington have worked together to establish legislative priorities and agenda, and to communicate a concise and consistent message to legislators and the governor's office.

WCRC supports these priorities. Both green building and the ban of toxic flame retardants are directly related to our mission.

### *Grassroots Recycling Alive in Leavenworth*

While most urban residents in Washington enjoy easily accessible recycling services, residents in many rural communities have fewer options. Volunteers living in or near Leavenworth saw a need for expanded recycling in the region and formed a new group this past January. The goal of Upper Wenatchee Valley Citizens for Recycling is to construct a recycling center and start operations by January 2007. Information would also be offered on sustainable living. Until such a center is available, the group is looking for an interim drop-off site.

A feasibility survey conducted by the group found support for the establishment of a convenient drop-off recycling center in Leavenworth. Respondents also pledged to donate money and time.

For more information, visit [www.leavenworthrecycles.org](http://www.leavenworthrecycles.org).

## Why WCRC Is Talking About Producer Responsibility

*By Suellen Mele, WCRC Program Director*

I've spent considerable time over the last 15 years thinking about and working in the field of recycling. WCRC has an even longer history in the field. It was born out of efforts in the late 70's - unfortunately unsuccessful - to pass a state bottle bill. It grew into an organization that advocated - this time more successfully - for residential and business recycling programs throughout the state. It might be tempting to declare success and go home. But a deeper look into the current situation says otherwise.

We have still not achieved Washington's 50% recycling goal, but that is only the tip of the iceberg. Much that we count as recycled is actually "downcycled." Writing paper recycled into tissues will, after one more use, go into the landfill or incinerator. Plastic containers made into park benches, after one more use (albeit a longer one), are destined for the same fate. Getting one more use from a material is good, but it's not good enough. And many products contain toxics, making recycling

### RECOMMENDATIONS FROM P. 1

of TVs and computer monitors.

The Washington bill, championed by Representative Mike Cooper (D-Edmonds), originally contained strong producer responsibility language. At the House Committee hearing, diverse stakeholders - local governments, non-profit groups, a charity, recyclers, a representative from the Governor's Sustainability Panel, and others - testified in support of this bill.

Nonetheless, opposition to the original bill resulted in legislation that instead calls for the study and recommendations described above. As the recommendations are developed, WCRC will continue to advocate for producer responsibility and convenient electronics recycling for our members and all Washington citizens.

more challenging and risky. Not just products like pesticides and anti-freeze, but also products like the cushions we sit on and the cell phones we use.

Why aren't more materials in products used over and over again? And why aren't more products recyclable? A big part of the answer is simply this: They aren't designed to be.

Many of us who work in recycling have concentrated on what to do with a product once it is discarded. Now, we are learning that we need to look upstream to the start of the product's life, to its design.

That's a big reason WCRC is focusing on producer responsibility. When manufacturers are held responsible for arranging and paying to recycle their products at end-of-life, they have a financial incentive to design those products differently, to make them more recyclable and less toxic.

Governments, recycling companies, haulers and others have worked hard to make recycling successful. We citizens have done our part, too. But we can't change the design of products. It's time for manufacturers to step up to the plate. In the long run, it will be the only way recycling will truly succeed.

## Kudos for Steps in Right Direction

Last summer, **Hewlett Packard** and **Office Depot** teamed up on a seven-week nationwide project to collect and recycle computers, TVs, and other electronic equipment. This pilot project was a significant experiment in producer responsibility. HP and Office Depot financed the program. There were no charges to the customer. This is how WCRC thinks product takeback should be financed - by producers as a regular part of the cost of doing business. The pilot project also demonstrated how a manufacturer and retailer could collaborate to offer a convenient, easy-to-use program. The results? 425,000 items weighing 5,100 tons were collected in 7 weeks. Over 50% were monitors and TVs.



## Phase Out of Toxic Flame Retardants Recommended

A draft plan to reduce threats from toxic flame retardants has been released by the Washington State Department of Ecology. One class of flame retardants, polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDEs), is widely used in consumer products, including furniture, electronics and textiles. The plan addresses three forms of PBDEs, recommending a complete ban on Penta- and Octa-BDE and a ban on Deca-BDE in electronic equipment and in new upholstered fabric intended for the home or workplace.

Many citizens and environmental groups, including WCRC, are advocating for a phase-out of Deca-BDE in all products.

PBDEs are very similar to a class of chemicals known as PCBs, which were banned in the 1970s. PBDEs have been shown to cause adverse health effects in laboratory animals. Deca-BDE has also been shown in studies to break down into other toxic and bioaccumulative forms of PBDEs.

PBDEs are increasingly being found in human tissue and breast milk samples here in the US and abroad. One recent study by Northwest Environment Watch found PBDEs in all 40 breast-milk samples taken from women in Oregon, Washington, British Columbia, and Montana. Another study showed high levels of PBDEs in Orca whales, including Puget Sound's southern resident Orcas. Still another showed PBDEs in dust from computer monitors (see related article). There are several theories about how PBDEs

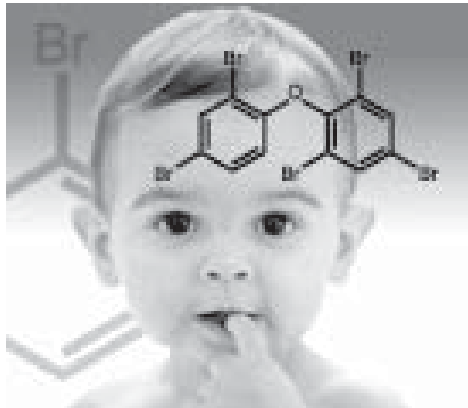
enter the body. They are found in food, especially animal fats, but they may also be inhaled in household dust.

### Toxic Flame Retardants in Computer Dust

In the first nationwide analysis of its kind, WCRC collaborated with the Computer TakeBack Campaign, Clean Production Action, and non-profit groups in eight states to analyze dust swiped from computer monitors. All of the 16 dust samples tested, including two from college computer labs here in Washington, contained toxic brominated flame retardants. The highest levels found were a form of polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDEs) called Deca-BDE – one of the most widely used flame retardants in the electronics industry. These results add to a growing body of evidence that toxic flame retardants are migrating out of consumer products, and point to computers as one likely source.

See [www.computertakeback.com](http://www.computertakeback.com) for the full report (second link under "headlines").

Safer alternatives are available and effective. Electronics industry leaders such as Apple, Toshiba, Dell, NEC, and Hewlett Packard are redesigning their electronic products to avoid the use of PBDEs and still meet top-level fire safety standards. Much of this activity is in response to phase out legislation in the European Union, which impacts manufacturers who sell to European customers.



**An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. The Precautionary Principle states that where threats of serious or irreversible harm to people or nature exist, precautionary action should be taken to prevent damage to human and environmental health, even when full scientific certainty about cause and effect is not available.**

### Thanks to Our Volunteers

Jesse Grayston volunteered his time to prepare WCRC's taxes. Liz Dayo, a graduated senior at Cleveland High School, researched market share and recycling policies of computer companies and helped keep our database current. Sandy Messner helped with thank you letters, the database, and correspondence. Thank you!

### Thanks to Our Funders

The Seattle Foundation recently provided a \$5,000 general operating grant. A Department of Ecology grant for \$19,000 is funding producer responsibility education. Earth Share of Washington, through workplace giving campaigns, provides over \$6,000 annually for operating and program support. WCRC is grateful for your support!



### Welcome, Jennifer!

Jennifer Kaufman had been thinking about getting involved with a non-profit environmental group for a while. She had just started the

Master of Public Administration program at Seattle University, and wanted an opportunity to directly experience how things work in an advocacy group. When a former WCRC board member told her about WCRC, she suspected that it would be a good match.

In October, the WCRC Board of Directors appointed Jennifer to fill an open interim board position. Jennifer is Seattle University's Environmental Coordinator and prior to that was Grays Harbor County's Recycling Coordinator for three years. She has a BS degree from Huxley College and a MES degree from The Evergreen State College, both in Environmental Science. Jennifer has enthusiastically jumped into Board work, already taking on a number of projects for WCRC.



# WASTE NOT

Washington Citizens for Resource Conservation

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## WCRC's MISSION

WCRC is a non-profit, citizen-based advocacy group working to keep Washington State a leader in waste reduction, recycling, use of recycled products and producer responsibility.

WCRC is a member of Earth Share of Washington. Please consider making a donation through your workplace giving campaign. Go to [www.esw.org](http://www.esw.org) for more information.

## WASHINGTON CITIZENS FOR RESOURCE CONSERVATION

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## WCRC's Annual Meeting and Holiday Party

You are invited to elect new board members, learn more about WCRC's work, and celebrate the season with our board and staff. We'll provide beer, wine and appetizers.

**December 9, 2004 from 5 – 7 p.m.**  
**2021 Third Avenue, Seattle**

**(Between Lenora & Virginia, parking on the street)**

This is not a fundraiser – leave your checkbook at home. We do invite you to bring any used books, videos, CDs, and DVDs that you'd like to donate. Eco-Encore will take your donated items, sell them online, and direct proceeds from the sale to WCRC. Please tag items with your name and address, so that we can send you tax deduction information.

## WCRC Elections

Cast your vote for new board members at WCRC's annual meeting or by mailing in your ballot. Go to [www.wastenotwashington.org](http://www.wastenotwashington.org) for further instructions.

