

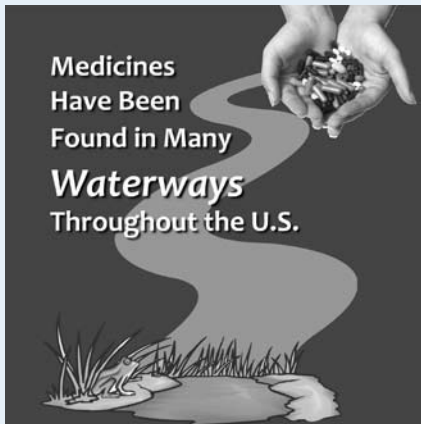


WASTE NOT

WASHINGTON CITIZENS FOR RESOURCE CONSERVATION

FALL 2007

WCRC Hosts Think Tank on Medicines



Design by Danielle Pulliam, EcoChica Design

A nationwide study found organic wastewater contaminants in 80% of 139 streams sampled. Among the most frequently detected contaminants were steroids and non-prescription drugs. (Source: United States Geological Survey, 2002)

WCRC staff and board are very pleased with the success of the Medicine Return Pilot Program. However, while proper disposal of pharmaceuticals is important, WCRC is also looking "upstream" to find ways to reduce the potential toxicity of medicines as well as to reduce the quantities of medicine that become waste in the first place.

WCRC will host a think tank designed to brainstorm and prioritize ideas for ways to reduce the impact of medicines on the environment. Think tank members may include doctors, nurses, pharmacists, toxicologists, chemists, environmentalists, drug developers and policymakers. Our intent is that the think tank will generate specific action steps to guide WCRC's work in this area over the next year.

For more information about the think tank, please contact Eva Dale at eva@WasteNotWashington.org or 206-441-1790.

Keeping Medicine Out of Our Water

What should we do with our expired or leftover medications? For a while we were told to flush them or put them in the trash. Now we know better. We know that toilets, sinks and garbage cans are not the right places to dispose of unwanted medicines. Improper disposal increases the risk of environmental contamination from medicines that make their way into Washington's waterways and the Puget Sound. Medicines that accumulate in our medicine cabinets can contribute to accidental poisonings and illegitimate access that can lead to abuse.

Now there's a better way! WCRC is working with a coalition on a pilot project that enables residents to return their unwanted medicines for proper disposal. The project has been launched at 16 Group Health Cooperative pharmacies, with additional locations planned. This is the first program of its kind in the country, and it's a big step toward making unwanted medicines as easy to return as they are to purchase. In its first year of operation, the pilot program collected more than 3,000 pounds of medicines in their packaging.

The long-term goal is to establish an ongoing medicine return program that is safe, free and convenient for residents throughout the state. The project team hopes to transition the pilot to a sustainable product stewardship system similar to British Columbia's program, which is funded by over a hundred pharmaceutical companies as a "cost of doing business."

To use the Medicine Return Pilot Program, leave medicines in their original containers and bring them to a participating pharmacy. To find a pharmacy drop-off location near you, visit www.MedicineReturn.com or call 1-800-RECYCLE (1-800-732-9253).



Illustration by Shannon Leahy

BOARD MEMBERS WANTED

Interested in working with a knowledgeable and fun group of people who are committed to making a difference? Consider joining WCRC's Board of Directors. To LEARN MORE, CONTACT SUELLEN MELE AT:

suellen@WasteNotWashington.org

Climate Change and Recycling

Are recycling and climate change connected? Yes! Recycling materials into new products saves energy and reduces greenhouse gas emissions. In 2005, recycling efforts in Washington reduced greenhouse gas emissions by almost 3.2 million tons of CO₂ equivalent.

This year, WCRC worked with others to develop a bold policy option to impact climate change by significantly expanding source reduction, recycling, and composting. The policy option has been submitted to the State's Climate Advisory Team, which is considering a full range of policies as part of Governor Gregoire's "Washington Climate Change Challenge." If implemented, the option would dramatically decrease waste and increase recycling – and reduce greenhouse gases by an estimated 29 million metric tons of CO₂ equivalent between now and 2020.

In 2008, WCRC will stay active on your behalf to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through better waste reduction, reuse, and recycling. Please contact us with your ideas or to volunteer!

Needed: Manufacturer Programs to Recycle Fluorescent Bulbs and Tubes

WCRC enthusiastically supports switching to energy efficient lighting as an important step in conserving energy and reducing greenhouse gases. However, what should residents and businesses do with fluorescent bulbs and tubes when they burn out?

Each fluorescent bulb or tube contains a small amount of mercury, a potent neurotoxin that needs special handling when discarded. Current national recycling rates for fluorescent bulbs and tubes are an estimated 2% from households

Five States Follow Washington's Lead on Producer Responsibility

When Washington passed a landmark electronics recycling law last year, our approach gained widespread attention and helped tip the balance toward producer responsibility around the country. In 2007, five additional states passed laws requiring manufacturers to fund recycling programs for discarded electronics.

Washington's progressive law creates a manufacturer-financed system for recycling computers and TVs starting in 2009. This will mean free and convenient recycling for all residents, schools and small businesses throughout Washington. It also means that manufacturers will have an incentive to design greener products. When manufacturers pay for recycling, they have a financial incentive to make computers and TVs that are less toxic and easier to recycle.



WCRC played a lead role in the development of the law, but our work was far from over. For the past 18 months, we participated on an advisory panel for the development of rules to implement the law and create environmentally protective standards for recycling the equipment.

Our thanks go to the 20 environmental groups and over 500 individuals who signed onto letters, attended a hearing, or sent emails asking the Department of Ecology to develop strong standards.

Ecology has recently released the final rules, which contain a number of key protections. However, Ecology determined that it was beyond their legal authority to require that subcontractors handling toxic materials meet the same requirements as the recyclers. This stipulation will instead be included in voluntary "preferred" standards. As the electronics manufacturers develop their recycling plans, WCRC will work to ensure that they follow – and even exceed – the preferred standards for protecting the environment and human health.

Computer and TV Recycling

Between now and the 2009 launch of the manufacturers' electronics recycling program, the best option for recycling a computer or TV is to bring it to a member of the Take It Back Network. These retailers, repair shops, and other businesses are committed to getting your equipment to a recycler who meets certain standards for environmentally-sound processing. For now, you will likely need to pay a fee to cover the cost of responsible recycling.



The first Take It Back Networks were started in King and Snohomish Counties a few years ago. WCRC liked the model so much that we worked with Tacoma, Pierce County and Yakima County to get Networks up and running in those jurisdictions. And Walla Walla County plans to launch a Network in the near future. The Take It Back Networks mean more recycling options for residents right now and more collection locations that can easily transition to the producer-funded system in 2009. For more information, please visit www.takeitbacknetwork.org.

and 30% from businesses. Local governments cannot afford to foot the bill to collect and manage the large numbers and types of toxic consumer products that are on the market.

The answer? WCRC urges manufacturers to be part of the solution by creating and financing a convenient and environmentally safe recycling system for mercury-containing fluorescent bulbs and tubes.

As an important interim program, King County has worked with the private sector to develop a Take It Back Network for fluorescent bulbs and tubes. For more information, go to www.takeitbacknetwork.org. WCRC would like to see this successful program expanded to other parts of the state. Please ask your local retailers to join the Take It Back Network. They can visit the link above to learn how.

Product Stewardship Inspiration from British Columbia

By Suellen Mele, WCRC Program Director

On a drizzly fall day in early October, 60 people from Washington and Oregon boarded buses heading north to see for ourselves how product stewardship programs are working in British Columbia. Our group included elected officials, solid waste and wastewater agency managers, recycling and hazardous waste staff, and others. I was eager to experience these programs firsthand, since they provided the model and inspiration for Washington's landmark electronics recycling law.

In B.C., producers take responsibility for managing not only discarded electronics, but also unwanted medicines, paint, beverage containers, tires, pesticides, gasoline, solvents, and motor oil. Some of these product stewardship programs have been operating for over 10 years and new ones are regularly launched.

During the tour, which was hosted by the Northwest Product Stewardship Council, we met some of the industry stewards responsible for the programs. We learned that 157,000 tons of products from Metro Vancouver are recycled through stewardship programs funded by the producers, saving that government over \$6 million annually. We also toured a paint processing facility, a privately run multi-material



WCRC staff Eva Dale and Todd Carey at a Changes Recycling Centre at Save-On-Foods in British Columbia.

collection depot, and the innovative "Changes Recycling Centre" for Save-On-Foods grocery stores (see related photos).

On the bus back home, I moved from one animated conversation to the next. Many of the speculations and strategies were about "what's next?" The electronics recycling law was the first product stewardship law in Washington. But based on the interest, thoughtful questions, and excitement of the people on the tour, it won't be the last.



Changes Recycling Centre partners with manufacturers to voluntarily take back packaging for recycling. Customers that recycle the packaging receive Bonus Points good for discounts on products at the Save-On-Foods grocery store.

WCRC NEWS

Thanks to Our Funders

WCRC gives our heartfelt thanks to all of our wonderful members for your support, and to the following groups who funded our work in 2007:

- The Bullitt Foundation
- Computer TakeBack Campaign
- Earth Share of Washington
- Linda Sue Park Fund for Gaia
- Puget Sound Action Team (Public Involvement and Education fund)
- The Russell Family Foundation
- Seattle Biotech Legacy Foundation

Supporting WCRC

Your membership is essential to WCRC's efforts to prevent waste and advocate for product stewardship. Please consider donating by using the enclosed envelope or going to www.WasteNotWashington.org.

You may also support WCRC through your workplace. Ask your human resources professional if you can give at work, and if your workplace matches your gift. WCRC is a member of Earth Share of Washington, which partners with businesses and government agencies to offer employees the opportunity to give to the environment at work through payroll giving programs. Please visit www.esw.org for details.

Gearing up for Legislative Session

As the 2008 legislative session approaches, Washington's environmental community has announced its four *Priorities for a Healthy Washington*:

- Washington Climate Action
- Local Solutions to Global Warming
- Evergreen Cities
- Local Farms - Healthy Kids

Over 20 environmental groups, including WCRC, worked together to establish this ambitious and focused set of priorities. For details about the 2008 Priorities and to track their progress during the legislative session, go to: www.environmentalpriorities.org.



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Washington Citizens for Resource Conservation

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Washington Citizens for Resource Conservation

WCRC is the public's voice for zero waste. We protect people and our natural world by advocating for products designed and produced to be healthy, safe, and continually recycled and reused.

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Todd Carey, *Project & Office Manager*
Eva Dale, *Project Manager*
Suellen Mele, *Program Director*

WCRC's Annual Meeting and Holiday Party

You are invited to celebrate the season with WCRC's board and staff. At a brief business meeting, we'll also elect board members, mark our 2007 successes, and discuss 2008 plans. We'll provide beer, wine and ample appetizers.

Monday, December 10, 2007

5 – 7 p.m.

2021 Third Avenue, Seattle

(Between Lenora & Virginia, parking on the street)

WCRC Board Elections

WCRC members are encouraged to cast your vote for board members at WCRC's annual meeting or by mailing your ballot. Contact Suellen Mele at 206-441-1790 to obtain a ballot. Ballots must arrive by December 10.

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