

Zero Waste Washington Fall Quarterly Enewsletter

November 2017

China National Sword: What it means to you

If you can't decide where to throw your item, do you just toss it in the recycle bin hoping it will be acceptable? Sometimes I do too! But I have now realized that it is a really bad idea to *hope* that something will be recycled.

We all need to work to make sure the materials we put in our recycling bins are as clean as possible and are the items that our recycling facility can actually handle. We have had an overdue wake-up call from China!

Earlier this year, China announced that a new *National Sword 2017* policy would go into effect by December 31. They will restrict import of 24 recyclable commodities, including low-grade plastics and unsorted mixed paper. For example, as of January 1, 2018 all scrap materials imported into China may not exceed 0.3% contamination. This is a big deal because a large amount of our recyclables has been shipped overseas, mostly to China, and most bails are contaminated well beyond the 0.3% number.

Why is China saying no to importing our recycled products? For years, we have sent bails of 'recycled' materials to China and other countries that are full of contamination and garbage. Paper in plastics bails, plastic in paper bails, and glass shards in everything. They no longer want to take our contaminated wastes. And they want to encourage their own circular economy. Learn more here (<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/swfa/commingled/faq-china.html>).

This is an opportunity for us! We have long needed to improve the quality of our recycling. We also need to promote local manufacture of products from our recyclables. Changes won't be easy and won't be free. But we can do it!

As we look toward the next State legislative session, we are gearing up to advocate passage of the Medicine Takeback bill, update our E-Waste bill, and getting toxic teflon-like chemicals out of food packaging. Let's add to that: improving our local recyclables market.

Thank you for standing with us!

Heather Trim

Executive Director

heather@zerowastewashington.org

Plastics Summit Recap

On September 25, over 200 people gathered in Tukwila to learn about and discuss a hot topic – Plastics! This one-day *Plastics Summit* highlighted current knowledge of plastics from microplastics in marine waters to plastics recycling challenges. The goal of the Plastics Summit was to stimulate cross-sector communication.



The summit presented technical, scientific, and up-to-date information about current issues, challenges and opportunities regarding plastics. The day brought together local and national scientific researchers, agency staff, industry reps, K-12 teachers, students, elected officials, and interested public.

One of the participants commented, “Let me tell YOU that the event is one of the best I have ever participated in or attended. The speakers, topics, range of information, location, logistics, everything!”

Technical Content

The three themes were Microplastics in Regional Waters, Plastics Composition/Contamination Issues, and Packaging. We learned about the Puget Sound-wide contamination of fish, birds and shellfish with microplastics, some of the major challenges in the conversion of plastic recyclables into new items, contamination of our compost, and new innovations in packaging.

Speakers were asked to present technical and up-to date information, which was noticed and appreciated by the audience. One participant commented, "I really appreciate the level of information presented. This was not created for the least common denominator. We have a very well-educated public in the Seattle area and it is refreshing to attend an event that speaks to all of the people in the room."

If you would like to see the PowerPoints and view the videos of the presentations from the day, please go to <http://www.zerowastewashington.org/index.php/plastics-summit-2017-summary>

We asked attendees to suggest potential future summit topics. And there were a lot! The highest rated topics included: recycling and life cycle, development of local processing and markets for recyclable materials, effects of plastics on humans and wildlife, closed loop policies, advanced solutions, textiles (microfibers and fast fashion), action around plastic bags and packaging, and success stories. Stay tuned for the 2018 summit's theme...

Thank you

Thank you to the sponsors of the Plastics Summit: Seattle Public Utilities, King County, Cascadia Consulting Group, the Washington State Recycling Association, and the Seattle Aquarium.

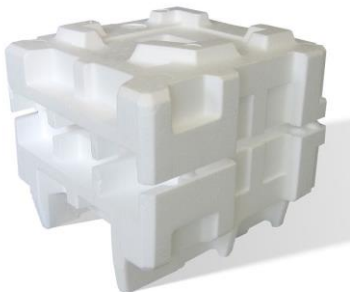
The Planning Committee members for the Summit were: Segoo Jackson and Pat Kaufman, Seattle Public Utilities; Kris Beatty and Lisa Sepanski, King County; Alli Kingfisher, WA State Department of Ecology; Sydney Harris and Anya Savrasov, US Environmental Protection Agency; Hannah Johnson, HumanEco Design & Consulting; Marie Novak, Cascadia Consulting; Ashley Bolden, The Endocrine Disruption Exchange; and Heather Trim and Eva Dale, Zero Waste Washington.

Good news: Home Depot eliminates EPS foam from holiday packaging

Home Depot announced in October that they will replace expanded polystyrene foam, or EPS foam, with recyclable materials such as molded pulp and paper as the packing cushioning for their private-label holiday products. This is a welcome step forward as we move forward difficult to recycle items such as EPS.



Did you know that holiday packaging creates a 25% increase in generated waste? Much of that waste is EPS foam, which made from petrochemicals and does not breakdown in the environment. According to Home Depot, "With this step away from EPS foam, we were able to eliminate 341,000 cubic feet of it from our packaging. That's 355 Greyhound buses-worth of non-recyclable foam kept out of our remaining landfills and waterways."



The Safer Chemicals/Healthy Families Coalition and other advocacy groups have been leading the charge to encourage big box retailers such as Home Depot to take a number of corporate responsibility moves, including reducing toxic chemicals in products and reducing waste.

Plasticizers in our Products

Phthalates are chemical plasticizers that can be found in all kinds of products, including PVC, furniture, flooring, medical devices, food packaging, pharmaceuticals, inks, personal care products, cosmetics, household cleaning products, clothing, and much more. Phthalates are also associated with many health problems, particularly reproductive health.

Zero Waste Washington has been working on a research project examining phthalates in outdoor products, such as paint, caulking, and traffic cones. For the first phase of the project, we've been compiling an inventory of the products found outside of businesses, agencies, and organizations. We've been enjoying the opportunity to talk to people in Seattle and Tacoma to find out what products they use. We've done assessments at 30 sites and talked to many building experts.

For the second part of the project, we'll be testing outdoor products to find out which ones do and don't have phthalates and at what levels. And we'll be looking for no/low phthalate options as alternatives to high phthalate products.

Read more about this issue and the project at

<http://zerowastewashington.org/index.php/campaigns/phthalates>

Climate Change and Zero Waste-Time to Act

Once in a lifetime fires and floods are becoming normal weather events due to the changes in our climate caused by increases in harmful greenhouse gas (GHG) pollution. In order to prevent climate change from reaching an irreversible state, we must act now. President Trump's decision to withdraw the U.S. from the Paris Climate Accord has made this task ever more challenging. Thus, the actions taken by local governments and businesses-- cities, states, and industries -- are more crucial than ever. There is a groundswell of support in Washington State for being the leader on climate.

At Zero Waste Washington, we play a pivotal role in preventing GHGs by conserving natural resources through product stewardship and recycling. The energy used in the extraction of raw products is significant. GHG emissions are generated from the entire life cycle of products - manufacturing, transportation, and disposal. We're proud of the work we do as an organization, and are eager to take greater action by influencing the law.

Earlier this summer, Zero Waste Washington's Board of Directors voted to join the Alliance for Jobs and Clean Energy coalition. The Alliance is made up of over 180 organizations in Washington, representing environmentalists, labor unions, communities of color, businesses, anti-poverty advocates, healthcare providers, and many more. The Alliance is seeking a climate policy that is effective in reducing GHGs and equitable in creating benefits and addressing impacts.

Last January, the Alliance worked to get a climate bill introduced in Olympia that would accomplish this vision, called the Clean Energy Transition Act. The bill didn't pass in the legislative session, but it serves as a wake-up call and model for the Alliance policy principles. The Alliance is prepared to refashion this bill into a ballot initiative which would go before voters in November 2018 if that's what it takes to make its policy vision

become law. The policy will include a mechanism to create competitive grant funding opportunities for building new clean energy infrastructure, and restoring the health of our forests and waterways.

These investments will lower GHGs and make Washington more resilient to the damaging effects of climate change. Low-income families would be shielded from higher energy costs. Trade-exposed and energy intensive businesses would get incentives to reduce their GHGs while maintaining their competitiveness. Workers in energy intensive industries would receive income and other vital support they might need in the event they lose their jobs.

Of particular interest to Zero Waste Washington members is that under the bill, local governments, recyclers, and waste management agencies could apply for grant funding to meet a variety of needs. Recycling facilities could get investments to make their processes more energy efficient. Trucks could switch to running on cleaner, low-carbon fuels. Waste centers and landfills could generate electricity with funding to harness energy from their leaking methane.

To qualify for the fall 2018 ballot, the Alliance will need to collect 350,000 signatures starting in January and going through June. It will be a challenging year and the Alliance is looking for committed volunteers to do the hard work of campaigning for this policy and collecting signatures to get it on the ballot.

To find out how you can get involved, please visit: <https://jobs-clean-energy-wa.com/get-involved/> or email Sameer Ranade at sameer@wecprotects.org.

Bill Wiginton, 1946-2017

We were sad to learn that Seattle recycling pioneer, Bill Wiginton, died while out for a run on September 23rd at age 71. Bill founded Rainbow Recycling in the early 1970s in a garage on Capitol Hill in Seattle and moved to an Eastlake warehouse in 1976. Recycling stations were set up around Seattle starting at the Montlake Hop-In Grocery. This was before Seattle offered curbside pickup.



Rainbow eventually acquired Seattle Recycling and was in turn bought by Waste Management in 1987. Bill helped his life partner Sooz Appel run Nuts 'n' Bolts Recycling which continued until 2009, serving up to 2200 apartment buildings in north Seattle.

According to Sooz, "Bill believed passionately in working for economic and racial justice. His famous "I don't believe in rich people" comment has sparked many a lively conversation. So, if you're so inclined, honor him by working for justice, speaking out to protect those who are being harmed by the vast inequality in our world or giving money to others who are working to create a better world. One of the best ways of honoring Bill is to live your lives in the most honest and authentic way you know how. Know clearly what you believe in and live those beliefs. Be kind to each other. Practice generosity. And of course, continue being your wonderful quirky selves, just like he was."

Plastic Bag Bans

Are you interested in helping reduce plastic pollution in your city? There are currently 14 bag ordinances in place at cities and counties in the state. Zero Waste Washington is helping support community members establish new ordinances. We are also gearing up to help work on Food Serviceware ordinances (i.e., foamed polystyrene bans). If you would like to help and find out more, please contact Kyla Wilson at kyla@zerowastewashington.org or Heather Trim at heather@zerowastewashington.org.

End of Year Appeal

Thanks for taking the time to read our quarterly newsletter! Zero Waste Washington has accomplished a great deal this year, none of which would have happened without you. And, as you can see, we are facing big challenges to reduce toxics, improve recycling, and encourage reuse in 2018.

Our year-end fundraising campaign is underway. You can support our work by making a donation online [here], or mailing your check to: 816 2nd Ave, Suite 200, Seattle, WA 98104. And, thanks.

You are invited!

Please join us for Zero Waste Washington's Annual Meeting, which is a Holiday Party! The date is Friday, December 1, 2017, from 6-8:30 pm, at Heather Trim's home in Seattle ([contact us](#) for the address). You will enjoy good food, great community and a fun "waste "themed interactive game show!

Before and at the event, Zero Waste Washington members can vote for board members by going online at www.zerowastewashington.org or in-person. To vote by mail, call us at (206) 441-1790 and we'll send you a ballot. Board members up for re-election are Anisha Shankar and Marie Novak. New nominees are Teresa Jones and Shirlee Tan.

Email version:



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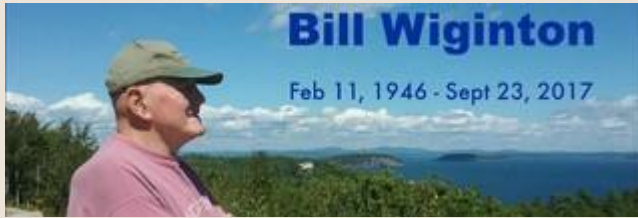
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Zero Waste Washington is the public's voice for zero waste. Our members are at the heart of all we do. Your tax-deductible contribution directly supports our tenacious, effective advocacy both for big-picture change and on the ground in our community. **Thank you!**

[Make a donation](#)

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