

Zero Waste Washington Winter Quarterly Enewsletter

February 2018

Do emails count?

I hate to admit it, but I was a skeptic. I wasn't 100% convinced that the emails we send to our state legislators make a difference. Was I ever wrong!

As I walked around to different Senate legislative offices last Wednesday to promote the "Right to Repair" bill (see details below), it was amazing to see that every legislative aide immediately recognized the bill even though the bill was not yet in the Senate process. "Oh, yes," they said. "We know all about that bill. We have been getting emails. It is getting attention."

It turns out that even a small number of form emails coming in over time add up and are enough to show that a bill is worthy of consideration. This late-breaking bill was initiated in January with little hope of succeeding during our short two-month legislative session. Thanks to just a few emails, along with it being a worthy issue of course, it has a chance!

Bottom line: our emails do make a difference! I am going to be much more diligent about sending them in myself. In our next article, you will see lots of great zero waste bills where sending an email to a legislator will make a difference.

We urge you to take action on all issues that you care about from transportation to climate change to education.

Here's to a great 2018!

Gratefully,
Heather Trim
Executive Director
heather@zerowastewashington.org

Safe disposal of unused medicines

Zero Waste Washington's #1 priority at the state legislature this year is SHB 1047 - the Secure Drug Take-Back Act - which is championed by Representative Strom Peterson. We have put significant resources into support of this bill and we are pleased to let you know that it will be coming up for a vote on the house floor very soon.

Secure Medicine Return ordinances that are similar to SHB 1047 have been passed in King, Snohomish, Kitsap, Pierce, Clallam and Whatcom Counties. Skagit County is considering an ordinance right now. This means that 60% of the state's population will soon have access to secure take-back boxes at local drugstores, medical centers and sheriff's offices where leftover, unused and unwanted medicines can be dropped off for safe disposal. Takeback boxes and the disposal of medicines will be paid for by the pharmaceutical industry.



Zero Waste Washington and a broad coalition of agencies and organizations supported these ordinances because of concerns about the opioid epidemic, suicide prevention, children's poisonings, and drugs getting into fish and other wildlife in our rivers, lakes and marine waters. Now, our goal is to make this program available to ALL residents of Washington State.

We have a brand new video about secure medicine takeback:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Po4EblbPr8> Let us know what you think!

To learn more about the issue and the bill, please go here:

<http://www.zerowastewashington.org/index.php/medicine-return-legislation-state>

Other legislative priorities

It is a hectic time of year. Bills are flying fast and furiously at the State legislature. And February 6 is a big cut off day for some bills (shown with an "*" below): all our policy bills must pass out of House fiscal committees and Senate Ways and Means Committee and be read into the record on the floor. In other words, bills will die if they don't get action by midnight Tuesday.

Here are the zero waste bills we support:

Safe Medicine Return (SHB 1047 - the Secure Drug Take-Back Bill): See above. This is our #1 priority.

Right to Repair (SHB 2279 - Concerning the fair servicing and repair of digital electronic products):

Are you frustrated that your local independent repair shop is shut out of parts and electronic information from the major manufacturers of cell phones and other digital products? **WHAT:** This bill requires digital electronic product manufacturers, such as Apple and Microsoft, to make available electronic and repair information, parts, and tools related to independent repair. This bill makes it possible for small businesses to do repairs of cellphones and other items with microprocessors and flat screens. This way, people will keep using their items instead of tossing them! **STATUS:** Bill passed out of House Committee on Technology & Economic Development and is in the House Rules Committee.

PFAS in food packaging (SHB 2658 - Concerning the use of perfluorinated chemicals in food

packaging): Do you want toxic chemicals in your paper plates and compost? **WHAT:** This bill would ban the use of Teflon-like chemicals in food packaging including "to go" containers. **STATUS:** Passed out of House Committee on Environment and is in the House Rules Committee. (Companion Senate Bill SSB 6396* passed out of Senate Committee on Agriculture, Water, Natural Resources & Parks and is now in the Senate Ways and Means Committee).

E-waste recycling (ESHB 1824 - Concerning electronic product recycling): Do you want to make sure there are strong penalties if e-waste is not safely recycled? **WHAT:** this bill updates the E-Cycle law that Zero Waste Washington championed in 2006. Adds transparency and sanctions for violations. **STATUS:** Bill is on the House floor (3rd reading) awaiting a vote.

Food waste (SHB 2411* - Reducing wasted food in order to fight hunger and reduce environmental impacts): Would you like to have more food waste go to people in need or, if inedible, to compost?

WHAT: This bill establishes a goal for the state to reduce, by 50%, the amount of wasted food generated annually by 2030, relative to 2017 levels. This would match the EPA goal established by the Obama administration. The bill requires assessment and planning by the department of ecology and cities and counties. **STATUS:** Bill passed out of House Technology & Economic Development Committee and is in the House Appropriations Committee.

Paint (SHB 1376* - Concerning paint stewardship): Do you want your leftover paint to be recycled into new paint? **WHAT:** This bill would require stewardship of discarded latex and oil-based paint. A bill that has come up several times for the past few years and would be a major step forward for Washington if passed. **STATUS:** The bill is in the House Appropriations Committee.

Recycling. (SHB 2914* - Concerning Washington's economic development potential as a world leader in the responsible management of postconsumer materials): Do you want recycling to be improved and more local processing of our recyclables? **WHAT:** This bill requires the departments of commerce and ecology to do arrange for the completion of an economic analysis of recyclable material and solid waste processing, export, and disposal activities, and with stakeholders, develop guidelines designed to help counties and cities reduce collected recyclable material contamination rates and promote statewide best practices in the types and materials of recyclable material collection. **STATUS:** Bill passed out of House Technology & Economic Development Committee and is in the House Appropriations Committee.

Environmental priorities

Zero Waste Washington is part of the Environmental Priorities Coalition. The Coalition is made up of more than 20 statewide organizations working to safeguard our environment and the health of our communities in the state legislature. For the 2018 legislative session, we have adopted four priorities essential for healthy communities and a thriving environment:

Act on Climate. SB 6203*- Reducing carbon pollution by moving to a clean energy economy. **STATUS:** Bill in Senate Ways and Means.

Sustainable Water Management. Response to Hirst decision. **STATUS:** The legislature compromised and passed a bill that was not favorable to the environment and then they passed the state capital budget (earlier in January).

Action for Toxic-Free Food Packaging. See above. Zero Waste Washington is a partner on this bill.

Oil Spill Prevention Act. SB 6269* - Strengthening oil transportation safety. **STATUS:** Bill is in Senate Ways and Means Committee.

Partnership Agenda. The coalition has also adopted a Partnership Agenda. This agenda supports work that is important for environmental progress being led by partners outside the coalition and include the WA Voting Rights Act (HB 1800, SB 6002), Preventable Pesticide Drift Exposure (HB 1564), Solar Fairness Act (SB 6081), and Presumptive Disease for Firefighters.

Teflon chemical found in compost study



Zero Waste Washington helped research a group of toxic chemicals called per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAs), that is showing up in commercial composts from across the US. These chemicals are the same ones that are found in nonstick pans and in a range of moisture and oil-repelling products like fast food wrappers, fiber containers from salad bars and food courts, your rain gear, or your stain proof carpet.

We arranged for the collection of ten composts that are provided to residents from commercial facilities in Washington, Oregon, California, Massachusetts and North Carolina. We then partnered with a research team at Purdue University to analyze of the compost samples for a specific subgroup of PFAS known as perfluoroalkyl acids, which are classified by the number of carbon molecules in their structure which allows scientists to define them as short or long chain structures (4-16 carbons). PFAS are used in many commercial applications because they are fire-resistant and repel water, fat and other substances. Uses include food serviceware products such as paper plates and to-go containers, pizza boxes and popcorn bags that often end up in wastes that are composted for reuse as fertilizers.

Nine of the samples in this study were generated by commercial compost facilities and one was from a backyard compost bin. The scientists at Purdue extracted and analyzed the 10 samples using a method similar to that recommended by the EPA.

Why are PFAS a problem?

PFAS are persistent. That is, they don't break down for a long time. The Fluorine-Carbon (F-C) bonds they are named for are one of the strongest known in chemistry, and because of this F-C bond they are often referred to as "forever-chemicals" because they do not breakdown easily once they are made. They are associated with numerous health issues for humans and wildlife.

What we found

The compost data are preliminary and the research team is still finalizing the data quality assurance. Preliminary results showed that the commercial composts that contain mixed food and yard waste and *compostable food serviceware* had levels of PFAS that are much higher than those without the compostable food serviceware.

The implications

Our paper plates, pizza boxes, and french fry sleeves are contributing PFAS to the compost that is made from our curbside yard and food waste. The levels of PFAS are high enough to potentially be a concern. Why? The toxic chemicals may move from compost into stormwater or groundwater when it rains, potentially entering drinking water. Plants grown in contaminated compost might also take up these chemicals leading to possible exposures in fruits and vegetables.

Further leaching tests are planned and we will keep you updated. Upon completion of the study, the data will be formally published in a peer review journal.

What you can do

Please support SHB 2658/SSB 6396, described above. We need to get these chemicals out of food packaging and food serviceware!

Owen's List: New local resource in Seattle for hard to recycle items

Owen's List is a new project by a father and son team to help Seattleites discover new ways to reuse and recycle more of their stuff. They find and vet local partners who will accept items that can be diverted from landfills and put to better use. Sometimes they also offer pickup and delivery where they take your stuff along with theirs!

Past recycling pickups have included Styrofoam, light bulbs, batteries, non-working holiday lights, plastic film, and textiles. They have also worked with nonprofits in our community to extend the useful life of things that accumulate in people's homes, such as blankets, by donating them to those in need. You can sign up for Owen's List [here](#).



They also really like new ideas, so get creative and send suggestions their way!

Here is a great news piece about Owen's list: <http://www.king5.com/article/news/local/father-and-son-turn-recycling-into-a-neighborhood-event/281-510300741>

You're Invited to Tea: February 10

Do you have opinions about what is going on? Response to China Sword? Right to repair?

Zero Waste Washington is hosting an afternoon Legislative Action Tea on February 10th, 3-5 pm. This informal event is being hosted at the beautiful home of Zero Waste Washington Board member Steve Gilbert and his wife Janice Camp in Seattle. We will have tasty food and drinks, including homemade scones!

Our lobbyists who are in the thick of the work in Olympia right now working on a range of zero waste-related policies will be there to give us the latest inside news and answer questions. They want to hear from us, too, so there will be time for lots of discussion. And you will have the opportunity to take action on the items you care about.

We would love to hear your ideas about solutions and policy pathways forward on zero waste issues! As you know, there is much turmoil right now in the recycling world because of China's new waste import restrictions.

It will be a lively conversation and lots of fun. To rsvp and get details, please email Heather at heather@zerowastewashington.org

Please join us!

Counting litter collaboratively

Zero Waste Washington has launched a new project to help coordinate and support the many community science groups, nonprofits, scout troops, school groups, and other civic groups that do litter cleanups and creek monitoring. We need to fill a big data gap: quantifying the amount and sources of plastics getting into our waters and flowing down into our Sound and ocean.



We are working with the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to help test their new trash assessment protocol across the state. Many, many groups are participating and we would love for your group to join in! We will provide help.

If you are interested in helping test the new protocol with your group and help us create baseline litter data for your geographic area, we would love to hear from you! Please contact Heather at: Heather@zerowastewashington.org.

How collecting trash data will help

In our local marine waters, like those all over the globe, micro- and macro- plastics are both floating in the water and accumulating in the bottom muds and beach gravels. This growing accumulation of plastic comes from marine litter and debris, but astonishingly, we now know that an estimated 80% originally comes from land sources (i.e., our watersheds).

One-use plastic disposable items, such as plastic bags, vape tubes, food serviceware, straws, plastic coffee lids, and other plastic waste, often accumulate along roadways and in public spaces, where the rain washes them into our waterways. Once this litter reaches creeks, rivers, lakes and the Sound, it is difficult to remove and the plastic gradually breaks down into tiny bits called microplastics. *It does not ever completely decompose.* Macro- and micro-plastics adversely impact the habitat of fish and wildlife.

Recent studies by University of Puget Sound researchers found plastics in local Chinook salmon, shellfish and birds. Researchers at the University of Washington Tacoma have conducted studies by using fine sieves pulled through the water behind research vessels. They also sampled the bottom muds. They have found that the microplastics are diverse and made up of items of various shapes, sizes and materials.

The problems of plastics in our waters include:

- Birds, fish and other aquatic organisms mistake the plastic bits for food, resulting in potentially fatal damage due to blocked intestines and starvation.
- Toxic chemicals are preferentially absorbed onto plastics because they are attracted to the “oily” nature of plastic relative to water. Thus, plastics can accumulate the toxic pollutants in our waters.

Humans, in turn, eat fish and shellfish, which have ingested these plastics, thus increasing the toxic load transferred to humans.

- Macroplastic litter can cause entanglement or in other ways harm mobility of organisms.
- Waterways and their banks and beaches can be marred by plastic buildup, impacting aesthetics and tourism.

The challenge

We have heard from many people that they do not see the connection between their use of disposable, one-use plastics and impacts of that use on aquatic species. This is a major problem!

That is why we have launched this coordinated litter assessment project. We need freshwater and land-based data about plastics. Working with local volunteer groups that conduct cleanups and/or water quality monitoring of creeks and rivers, we will test the new assessment protocol and create baseline data about quantities and types of plastic litter. The results of this work will be quantifiable plastics data in watersheds so that we can credibly demonstrate the scope of the problem in people's neighborhoods.

More plastic bag bans are coming!



In the meantime, 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 in many cities including Kent, Redmond, Bothell and Port Angeles and more. 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.

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Winter 2018 News from Zero Waste Washington

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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!](#)

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