



Memorandum

MONTEREY REGIONAL WASTE MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

Reviewed by Wmm Date 12/12/07
General Manager

DATE: December 14, 2007
TO: General Manager
FROM: Public Education and Recycling Manager
SUBJECT: Report on Public Education, Recycling and Litter Abatement Activities

The following is an update on recent staff activity.

Department of Conservation Grant for MRWMD Buy Back Recycling Center

The State Department of Conservation (DOC) has confirmed that our grant request for \$85,000 has been approved in full. These funds are to be utilized to help offset the capital cost of implementing a beverage container buy back operation on site. We expect to receive the signed funding agreement from the DOC before the end of the month with work getting underway to update the financial pro-forma for the project in January.

Litter Report

The November 14th meeting of the Peninsula Litter Abatement Task Force (Task Force) attracted an unusually large gathering to discuss the topic of alternatives to polystyrene (Styrofoam) fast food packaging. In addition to Task Force members, also attending were representatives from local environmental groups, the hospitality industry, the California Restaurant Association, and State Senator Maldonado. At the meeting it was agreed that a subcommittee of the Task Force be formed to evaluate fast food packaging, degradable packaging and the degradation of plastics in the marine environment. It was discussed that this Task Force could draft an ordinance for local consideration and from a public education and media stand point, it would be advantageous for all Peninsula cities to consider a Polystyrene fast food packaging policy at the same time. This sentiment is echoed in the attached editorial from the Contra Costa Times which states that leadership is needed on the issue of product bans to help cities work together. Angela Brantley from the City of Monterey and I will chair this subcommittee and report back to the Task Force at the next meeting on February 13, 2008.

District staff attended the County Illegal Dumping Task Force meeting on December 12, 2007. This meeting included an update from the California Integrated Waste Management Board (CIWMB) about their key activities related to illegal dumping. The state's combined minimum annual cost for illegal dumping is \$90 million. The CIWMB hopes to offer expanded grant opportunities to local government to deal with the illegal dumping problem and empower County Local Enforcement Authorities to include illegal dumping enforcement, abatement and awareness activities in their Enforcement Program Plan.

New AT&T Yellow Pages Recycling Section

The new AT&T phone books have been delivered around the County over the last six weeks. New this year is a tabbed Recycling Section in the middle of the directory. The books are shipped with the tab folded in but once unfolded it reads "Monterey County Recycling Resources" and "Recycling Guide" it makes for an easy reference to find regional recycling information. Thanks to the County of Monterey for purchasing the recycling tab at a cost of \$18,460.

The District partnered with the Salinas Valley Solid Waste Authority (SVSWA) to publish a three-page guide to local recycling centers and a matrix listing the materials they accept. In addition to several pages of information on Monterey County programs, Waste Management Incorporated has a two-page recycling and information guide for their curbside recycling programs.

Green Building Committee of the Monterey County Business Council

The Green Building Committee, chaired by William Merry, met on December 12, 2007. Interest in green building initiatives continues to gather momentum locally. The Green Building Expo in Monterey held on November 28th attracted 600 attendees as well as print and television media coverage. The District was represented with a green building display on our Administration building and our bus Traveling Educational Display (T.E.D.) was on exhibit. On January 22nd, Monterey's Go Green Initiative will go before the City Planning Commission for discussion. At the December 12th meeting, the Eco-Home Subcommittee reported that 90% of the home improvements that most homeowners undergo with their properties do not require a building permit. These are upgrades such as new windows, new appliances, water heaters and furnaces, and roof insulation. The Subcommittee is conceptualizing a program, possibly franchised by the Monterey County Association of Realtors, with the goal of creating a new pathway to improve the environmental performance of existing homes through an incentivized certification process. Such a program would be crafted to be good for the environment and good for the property owner by enhancing property value through energy efficient and "green" home upgrades.

Recycling in the News

A letter to the Monterey County Herald editor from Heidi Feldman appeared in the paper on December 7th. Heidi's letter was in response to an Associated Press article the Herald ran recently on worm composting which included no sidebar or reference to local programs. A local angle on this AP story would have mentioned that low cost worm bins are available to District residents at the Last Chance Mercantile and the District is sponsoring periodic workshops on home composting. We received more than one dozen phone calls from people that read Heidi's letter and asked to be put on the notice list for future workshops.

The Herald also ran two Associated Press articles on the topic of electronic waste recently. Both refer to environmental problems associated with exporting hazardous materials and again, neither article included a side bar with local information. The article titled "America Ships Electronic Waste Overseas" (attached) leads readers to conclude that domestic electronic recycling efforts are exporting hazardous wastes offshore and polluting foreign countries. In California, SB 20 established an advance disposal fee on the sale of new televisions and monitors. The fees collected under this program (ranging from \$10 to \$20 per unit) are used to offset the costs for collection, processing and recycling these items. The law also requires recyclers to be registered with the state, report on their operations, and "cancel" monitors and televisions domestically. This legislation was aimed to help curb toxic exports. We used this article as an opportunity to track specifically how our processor treats the electronic waste we collect here at the District: 233,289 lbs of CRTs, TVs and monitors collected in FY 05/06 vs. 483,855 lbs collected in FY 06/07.

The District presently contracts with E-Recycling of California (ERC), a Hayward-based company that specializes in end-of-life disposal of all electronics. They do not re-furbish or re-sell the items they collect. The company provided the following information about their process:

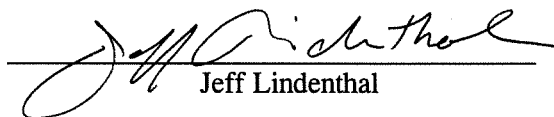
- The goal of ERC is to recycle all the material it collects through a combination of proven de-manufacturing processing methods and end market recycling provided by our vendor partners.

- De-manufacturing efforts vary depending upon the type of electronic device received and the mix of recoverable components. All significant end market vendors undergo an environmental review and may be audited by ERC or another vendor. Only companies who have passed this review process are used as end market vendors. Recycling rates for collected materials are typically 98% or greater.
- **Monitors, televisions, and CRT's** are unloaded at one of the ERC processing sites. Monitors and TVs are de-manufactured into recyclable components such as CRT glass, plastics, (metals, copper yokes, miscellaneous copper bearing material, and circuit boards. CRT glass is shipped to secondary processors for "glass to lead" or "glass to glass" recycling.
- **Computers, hard drives, laptop computers, and circuit boards** are de-manufactured and the components are separated into specific commodity types. Scrap metal is sold to a regional metal scrap market. Plastics are baled and sold to plastic recycling companies both domestic and foreign. Circuit boards are marketed directly to metal refiners in the United States, Canada and Europe.
- **Computer peripherals, cables, and consumer electronics** are separated into specific commodity types. Items such as toner, batteries, and inkjet printer cartridges are removed and properly recycled.

We have received several inquiries from the community concerning "where the recyclables go" that the District collects. District staff is compiling detailed information on the disposition of materials collected through our recycling programs and this information will be posted on our website to help inform the local community with regard to how and where materials get recycled. Staff will also seek to engage two high school groups that have contacted us recently with an interest in researching and reporting on this topic.

STRATEGIC PLANNING IMPACT

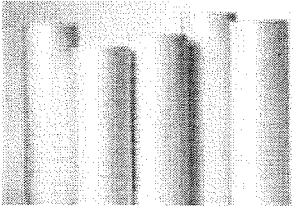
- A4c: Based on Waste Characterization and Analysis, identify new diversion opportunities.
- A6a: Program focus on public awareness, increased diversion of organics and commercial wastes, proper management of hazardous and prohibited materials, litter abatement, and sustainability.


Jeff Lindenthal

Attachment

City Moves To Ban Styrofoam

Contra Costa Times
December 02, 2007



First Plastic bottles, then plastic bags...now styrofoam has hit the list of items that are being banned by certain cities in California. While California City News has never believed that legislation and mandates from Sacramento has done much to make cities better, it is clear that what is developing throughout the state is the need for some sort of leadership and direction that could provide city staff and leadership with a list of what has been banned in what cities and why.

This is something that cities should take upon themselves - lest they be mandated by the state to do so.

It seems to us that the collective action of 478 cities working together would have greater affect if certain items were banned or reduced as a means of impacting the environment for the better - rather than each community acting independently and hoping that the great idea catches fire.

While CCN is not suggesting that cities should take action without a broader plan, we are suggesting that it's time that cities sought collective leadership on the issue and developed a procedure for best practices - at a minimum a list of consumer products that are banned from city limits, city purchasing or city sponsored events.

Until that time see the story here in the [Contra Costa Times](#) about what steps the city of Richmond is taking to ensure styrofoam stays outside the city limits

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 7, 2007

Opinion

Worm composting class

Worm poop on you for not including a local angle in Saturday's story about composting with red worms. Right in our backyard is the excellent compost education program offered by the Monterey Regional Waste Management District.

No problem using other interesting stories in our hometown paper, but why not include a little sidebar with information your readers can use right here? There are worm composting classes coming up. Call 384-5313 to find out.

Heidi Feldman
Pacific Grove

America ships electronic waste overseas

By TERENCE CHEA Associated Press Writer

11/18/2007

The Monterey County Herald

SAN FRANCISCO—Most Americans think they're helping the earth when they recycle their old computers, televisions and cell phones. But chances are they're contributing to a global trade in electronic trash that endangers workers and pollutes the environment overseas.

While there are no precise figures, activists estimate that 50 to 80 percent of the 300,000 to 400,000 tons of electronics collected for recycling in the U.S. each year ends up overseas. Workers in countries such as China, India and Nigeria then use hammers, gas burners and their bare hands to extract metals, glass and other recyclables, exposing themselves and the environment to a cocktail of toxic chemicals. "It is being recycled, but it's being recycled in the most horrific way you can imagine," said Jim Puckett of the Basel Action Network, the Seattle-based environmental group that tipped off Hong Kong authorities. "We're preserving our own environment, but contaminating the rest of the world."

The gear most likely to be shipped abroad is collected at free recycling drives, often held each April around Earth Day, recycling industry officials say. The sponsors—chiefly companies, schools, cities and counties—often hire the cheapest firms and do not ask enough questions about what becomes of the discarded equipment, the officials say.

Many so-called recyclers simply sell the working units and components, then give or sell the remaining scrap to export brokers. "There are a lot of people getting away with exporting e-waste," said John Bekiaris, chief executive of San Francisco-based HMR USA Inc., which collects and disposes of unwanted IT equipment from Bay Area businesses. "Anyone who's disposing of their computer equipment really needs to do a thorough inspection of the vendors they use."

The problem could get worse. Most of the 2 million tons of old electronics discarded annually by Americans goes to U.S. landfills, according to U.S. Environmental Protection Agency data. But a growing number of states are banning such waste from landfills, which could drive more waste into the recycling stream and fuel exports, activists say.

Many brokers claim they are simply exporting used equipment for reuse in poor countries. That's what happened in September, when customs officials in Hong Kong were tipped off by environmentalists and intercepted two freight containers. They cracked the containers open and found hundreds of old computer monitors and televisions discarded by Americans thousands of miles away.

China bans the import of electronic waste, so the containers were sent back to the U.S.

The company that shipped out the containers was Fortune Sky USA, a Cordova, Tenn.-based subsidiary of a Chinese company. General manager Vincent Yu said his company thought it was buying and shipping used computers, not old monitors and televisions, and is trying to get its money back.

Fortune Sky exports used computers and components to China, Malaysia, Vietnam and other Asian countries. "There's a huge market over there for secondhand computers that we don't use anymore," Yu said. "I don't think it's going to cause any pollution. If the equipment can still be used, then that's good for everybody."

Yu refused to say where he bought the material, but Basel Action Network tracked it to a San Antonio, Texas, company that collects computers, printers and other electronics from schools and businesses.

Activists complain that most exporters don't test units to make sure they work before sending them overseas. Reuse is the new excuse. It's the new passport to export," said Puckett of Basel Action Network. "Other countries are facing this glut of exported used equipment under the pretext that it's all going to be reused."

At the other end at customs, the goods don't always get checked either. "It is impossible to stop and check every single container imported into Hong Kong," said Kenneth Chan of Hong Kong's Environmental Protection Department. "Smugglers may also deliberately declare their ... waste as goods."

In the first nine months of this year, Hong Kong authorities returned 85 containers of electronic junk, including 20 from the U.S.

Exporting most electronic waste isn't illegal in the United States. The U.S. does bar the export of monitors and televisions with cathode-ray tubes without permission from the importing country, but federal authorities don't have the resources to check most containers.

The EPA recognizes the problem but doesn't believe that stopping exports is the solution, said Matt Hale, who heads the agency's office of solid waste. Since most electronics are manufactured abroad, it makes sense to recycle them abroad, Hale said. "What we need to do is work internationally to upgrade the standards (for recycling) wherever it takes place," he said.

The EPA is working with environmental groups, recyclers and electronics manufacturers to develop a system to certify companies that recycle electronics responsibly. But so far the various players have not agreed on standards and enforcement.

Many activists believe the answer lies in requiring electronics makers to take back and recycle their own products. Such laws would encourage manufacturers to make products that are easier to recycle and contain fewer dangerous chemicals, they say.

Eight states, including five this year, have passed such laws, and companies such as Apple, Dell, Hewlett-Packard and Sony now take back their products at no charge. Some require consumers to mail in their old gear, while others have drop-off centers. HP says it also now designs its equipment with fewer toxic materials and has made it easier to recycle.