

Comprehensive Recycling Planning Task Force

Residential/Consumer Subcommittee Report and Recommendations

Deb Dyar, facilitator

I. Situation Analysis

The 2008 Iowa Legislative Session House File 826 called for the creation of a comprehensive recycling planning task force to make recommendations for creating and enhancing comprehensive sustainable recycling programs in the state of Iowa.

The **Residential/Consumer Category** is defined as waste generated in single and multiple-family homes; includes apartments and condos.

The Residential/Consumer Subcommittee was charged with creating a plan that would enhance and grow sustainable recycling programs in the residential/consumer sector using the following criteria:

- a. Environmental Impact
- b. Economics
 1. Infrastructure
 2. Development and implementation costs
 3. Markets
 4. Economic impact
- c. Education and awareness
- d. Funding recommendations

II. Current and Emerging Issues

The Subcommittee discussed the current state of existing residential and multi-family recycling programs to identify problems associated with consumer awareness, access to recycling, types of waste, and a consumer attitudinal shift from waste management to resource management. Rather than focus on why to recycle, the Subcommittee believes we need to make recycling more personal. It's not about

adding complications to daily living; it's about showing people how easily recycling can become a habit.

The State and respective planning areas have made significant effort over the last decade to address residential recycling designed to make household recycling convenient and accessible including curbside recycling in largely urban areas and recycling and redemption centers across the state. The subcommittee determined that existing programs in both urban and rural areas are adequate, accessible and have existing infrastructure to support increased recycling. However, more needs to be done to build consumer awareness to the plethora of programs, services and recycling opportunities available to them.

Recommendations

- 1. Create a Statewide Recycling Public Education Campaign.** There are a number of recycling programs and services available across the state of Iowa today. However, it is the consensus view of this Subcommittee that many of these services remain largely unknown to the general population including consumers with a strong conservation ethic. The Subcommittee determined that improved residential recycling can be achieved through a statewide education/marketing campaign to:
 - Tap the Iowa environmental ethic to generate a cultural shift from waste management to resource management: recycling is a personal responsibility.
 - Educate consumers about the principles of product stewardship and the health and environmental impacts.
 - Raise national awareness to Iowa's environmental ethic and "brand" Iowa has a sustainable state with a strong environmental ethic.
 - Raise public awareness to the importance of recycling and waste reduction and the environmental, energy, natural resource and economic benefits to the public, the business community and legislative bodies.
 - Educate consumers on the recycling programs and services available across the state.

- Educate consumers about the types of materials that can be recycled including yard, food or other organic waste, electronic, appliances, tires, batteries and household hazardous materials).
- Encourage the purchase of recycled, durable and less toxic goods
- Educate consumers in the benefits of, and proper techniques for recycling.
- Educate K-12 children about the benefits of recycling.

The Campaign should include, but is not limited to the following elements:

- Development of tagline (Examples: Recycle! It's not garbage anymore, "Why waste a good thing" Seattle, WA) and key messages:
 - Thank Iowans for recycling
 - Showcase what their recyclables are made into
- Showcase product stewardship and lifecycle impacts.
 - Educate consumers about point of purchase
 - Educate on shared responsibilities (manufacturer, consumer, etc.)
- Direct people to statewide recycling website for recycling resources and consumer tips.
- Publicity blitz that includes advertising on radio stations, in neighborhood newspapers and business publications, newsletters to planning area customers and direct mail targeted to apartment managers and business owners that offers resources to help their tenants start recycling. Information stations would be set up at major events across the state including, but not limited to the Iowa State Fair, Des Moines Arts Festival, music festivals, cultural diversity events (special populations), home shows, sporting events, etc.

The recommended budget for this campaign is \$400,000 for development and implementation. Additional funds for long-term ongoing public outreach will be necessary.

Implementation will require approximately \$400,000 with possible funding sources to include: SWAP, RCC, IDNR, Farm Bureau, USDA, federal stimulus

monies, DOE, tipping fee, gambling monies or grants, private sector, community foundations, economic development agencies or other grant programs.

Measurement would be achieved by:

- Setting annual recycling goals and targets
- Monitor progress
- Audit recycling service requests and garbage disposal tonnage
- Annual reporting
- Continuous Improvement
- Statewide recycling website web analytics

2. Develop a Statewide Recycling Website. The Subcommittee supports the development of a statewide recycling website that would become the recycling resource for all Iowans. The website would be administered by the Iowa Recycling Association. And used as a marketing and recruitment tool for the State of Iowa. This website will:

- Complement and reinforce the Statewide Public Education Campaign.
- Connect people with recycle services. (Outreach to local governments, nonprofits, Chambers of Commerce and others to link local websites to statewide website.
- Provide information and technical support to help consumers, business and governments to reduce waste, recycle and buy recycled products.
- Reduce waste through consumer purchasing decisions – pre-cycling.
- Promote pollution prevention and the efficient use of resources.
- Offers incentives for recycling – an awards program or annual recognition program.

The recommended budget is \$100,000 for development and implementation. Additional funds for long-term ongoing public outreach will be necessary. Implementation and funding could include: SWAP, RCC, private sector grants, USDA, federal stimulus monies, tipping fee, state economic

development monies, gambling monies or grants, community development monies, private sector, city Curb-It! Revenues, or other grant programs.

Measurement would be achieved by:

- Web analytics
- Online surveys
- Annual reporting
- Continuous Improvement

Appendix

1. **Iowa Bottle Can Deposit Law** - The Subcommittee discussed at length the **existing bottle bill (IBCDL)**; the challenges for distributors, grocery stores and redemption centers and what if any recommendations could be developed to address them and achieve the desired recycling goals. Views on the bottle bill were diverse and no consensus was reached on any of the following issues and opinions that were presented by various subcommittee members and discussed:
 - a. Focus resources holistically to reduce, reuse and recycle and not limit our efforts to a small portion of the waste stream.
 - b. The penny handling fee is no longer sufficient to cover associated costs for redemption centers, forcing centers to close and subsequently reducing access for many customers wanting to recycle.
 - c. The bottle bill works with a high percent success rate.
 - d. Expand the bottle bill to include all ready to drink packaged beverages except dairy and raw cider.
 - e. Direct unclaimed deposits to a State environmental fund to be used for statewide recycling programs.
 - f. The bottle bill is onerous to grocery stores because they serve as redemption centers.

- g. Retail and distribution centers should be removed entirely from redemption. All recyclables and related recycling materials should be placed together, preferably in the existing curbside bin program available to a large percentage
- h. Return 4 cents of the nickel deposit to the consumer and give the remaining one cent to the redemption centers as a means to increase their funding.

The only point upon which there seemed to be some agreement was a suggestion to remove cans and bottles redemption from grocery stores, but only if there is a viable alternative that maintains or improves the current redemption rate of return.

2. Other recommendations that did not garner consensus support:

- a. Increase the handling fee to spur opening of additional redemption centers and entrepreneurship across the state. Recommendation failed on a 5 no 2 yes vote.
- b. Conduct pilot program to determine effectiveness of the Iowa bottle bill. The legislature would exempt for a period of one year one Solid Waste Planning area in the state of Iowa from the bottle bill. Cans and bottles would be recycled through curbside recycling programs, redemption centers and other recycling processes currently in place. The purpose of the pilot would be to quantify the rate of recycling with and/or without the bottle bill. This recommendation failed on a 5 no 2 yes vote.