



RECYCLING ADVOCATES

June 2002

Involving people in creating a sustainable future through local efforts to reduce, reuse, and recycle

New Opportunities to Recycle Plastic Film

– Jane Rosenstein

Several facilities in the Metro region are expanding the opportunity for recycling of post-consumer plastic films. The Metro Central and South transfer stations, and Wastech, a material recovery facility in North Portland owned and operated by Waste Management, are currently accepting clean, commingled films from the public.

The plastic films collected are high and low density polyethylene (LDPE, LLDPE, HDPE) and polypropylene (PP), constituting items such as shrink and stretch wrap, commercial bags and liners, lumber wrap and construction films, furniture wrap and some tarping. This is significant for households which source separate and store materials for delivery to recycling depots and MRFs - not only for the items which progressively accumulate over time such as grocery and merchandise bags, and disturbingly prevalent durable good packaging, but also for packaging left over from residential construction or landscaping jobs.

The principal end product for materials recovered in the region will be composite home siding products manufactured by Boise Building Solutions, a division of Boise Cascade. Currently, Marathon Recovery, a unit of Boise, operates facilities in Kent, WA and Oakland, CA where materials are received and graded. Construction is nearly

complete on a manufacturing facility in Elma, WA, which initially will put out a complete line of siding products. These composite products contain roughly 50% recycled plastic and 50% wood waste.

The primary aim of the Marathon Recovery program was to establish needed infrastructure and refine methods for plastic film collection in the region. These are similar to efforts made by several other manufacturers of plastic and composite lumber to use post-consumer material, including Trex Corporation, which operates a national sourcing program. The bulk of Marathon's material sourcing is now focused on the region between Vancouver, B.C. and the Bay Area. At capacity, Boise's new Elma operation will require sourcing of thousands of tons of films a month.

Shaky domestic and import markets for films over the past six to eight months had some predicting a tailspin for the burgeoning plastic lumber industry, which aims to take an increasing chunk out of the market for pressure treated wood products. Still, Marathon's efforts in developing a regional recovery system seem to be hitting the mark; the Kent facility received several hundred million tons of films last year, maintaining a small inventory and exporting the remainder.

The majority of material recovered comes from commercial generators. Marathon deals directly with large generators, and in partnership with
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How to Increase Your Legislative Influence

– Lori Stole

AOR's recent spring conference included a presentation on "A Day in the Life" at the Legislature, with Vickie Walker, state representative from District 13, Eugene, and Doug Myers, lobbyist in Salem for several groups including AOR. They taught us that citizens interested in working with their elected officials should not wait until the next legislative session gets underway. Now is a great time to start, while campaigns are really getting serious. Working on somebody's election campaign gives you a great opportunity to get to know them before you need them, and they will feel interested in helping out your causes down the road.

Working with a legislator before he/she is elected also will help you learn how to be most effective when you do want to approach them. Representative Walker and Mr. Myers both made it clear that elected officials have their own preferences and biases that affect reaching them with your message effectively. Walker explained that she receives so much mail, she won't open it unless it is from a constituent or on a pertinent topic. She especially notices handwritten notes, because they personalize a message. She doesn't like form post cards, but including a short handwritten note makes even them, more noticeable and palatable

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Plastic Films, cont.

haulers and other recyclers to capture materials from small and medium sized businesses as well as households. Marathon currently receives materials from two curbside programs - Seattle and San Jose, CA both of which offer dual stream curbside collection. The City of Portland is examining the possibility of adding plastic films to its curbside collection program.

To this point, recovery systems are being duplicated by MRFs within the target recovery area, as in the three Portland facilities. About eight tons of films have been collected at the Metro transfer stations since collection began in January of this year. Films delivered in mixed dry commercial loads to the Metro Central station are captured, and combined with films from labeled boxes in the public recycling areas of both facilities. Contaminants are removed as materials are baled. In contrast, Waste Management is collecting films from numerous commercial customers, while also making the Wastech drop site available to the public. Wastech sent more than 43 tons of material to Marathon in the first four months of 2002. This may put the facility on course to exceed the approximately 74 tons shipped to Marathon in 2001.

So, do your part to encourage regional plastic recycling - start a new bag in the basement for films you can't avoid, and spread the word. Of course, when you can, also buy recycled - the next time your house needs siding, look into composite siding.

Call Metro Recycling Information at 503-234-3000 for facility details; for more information on the Marathon program, contact Andy Thomas at 253-872-0779.

Minimum System Required

– *Betty Patton*

This phrase, appearing on most boxes of software sold today, is followed by a list of the latest hardware configurations. That statement is quite often one of the motivations for consumers to upgrade their hardware. We may need nothing more than additional hard drive space, or a faster processor to accommodate the new software. But quite often we replace our entire system, resulting in the waste of operating, useful hardware.

When we upgrade our operating system and application software, our newly created files are no longer compatible with older versions of the same application. So if we are exchanging files with others, all the users need to be within a couple of versions of each other for the data to be interchangeable.

Microsoft, the primary operating system and application software developer in the world, only offers technical support for Windows 98 era packages and subsequent versions. If we want to hang on to our older hardware and the software that works with it, we can no longer expect the manufacturer or developer to be available for maintenance.

So, how is it possible to use older hardware in today's interconnected world?

An alternative operating system, Linux, is not platform specific. It is based on a concept called open source software (OSS). This operating system supplies the user with the source code, allowing it to be compiled on any hardware. Users can also modify it. The OSS idea arose in the mid-1980s and Linux started in the early 1990s. Today it is installed

on everything from small mobile devices to large mainframes.

Linux quite often is referred to as free. This doesn't always refer to its price tag, but to the freedom to access its code. It is universally believed that its stability as an operating system is attributable to this openness. Because of its accessibility, applications of all kinds have been created to operate in a Linux environment. Many of these look like, act like, and interchange files with mainstream Microsoft applications such as Word and Excel.

This ten-year-old operating system gives hardware a longer life. It addresses all of the issues mentioned earlier: hardware compatibility, software upgrades, and file format compatibility, by allowing every one of its users to be software developers if they so desire.

It is common for the refurbished equipment to be targeted to a modest-income customer. Linux is open, therefore there is no licensing fee, and it is acceptable for almost all systems. The operating system and a myriad of applications are free and downloadable from the Web, giving users opportunities without the barrier of cost.

IT managers in corporations around the world are beginning to see the beauty of Linux. It offers a stable and reliable system on network servers. IBM, the New York Stock Exchange, Cisco Systems, and the U.S. Postal Service all rely on Linux for part of their communication network.

Linux does have some down sides for the home or small business user. Installation can be more difficult than the automated Windows installation, requiring a certain knowledge level not common among most users. In

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Minimum System, cont.

addition, users need some training and familiarity with the system before it becomes an easy to use tool. However, that knowledge is available and accessible. If a user has the incentive to learn what is necessary for a successful Linux based PC, the rewards are a stable and flexible operating system without costly upgrades.

Linux typically needs a 486 processor with 8MB of ram and a 40 meg hard drive. Compare that to what you need to use Windows XP Home Edition: 1) PC with 300 megahertz or higher processor clock speed recommended; 233-MHz minimum required; Intel Pentium/Celeron family, AMD K6/Athlon/Duron family, or compatible processor recommended. 2) 128 megabytes of RAM or higher recommended. 3) 1.5 gigabyte available hard disk space. 4) Super VGA (800 × 600) or higher resolution video adapter and monitor. 5) CD-ROM or DVD drive.

Linux's combination of hardware flexibility and software capability work to keep previously discarded PCs out of the waste stream and put them in the hands of users. Various organizations are beginning to recognize this value and are helping communities maximize the functionality of available computer hardware.

Legislative Influence, cont.

to her. The message can be as short as, "This issue is important to me. Please support it."

In approaching a particular cause, it was suggested that you need to start at the lowest possible point: your legislator and their staff. They want to hear from and be able to respond to you, their constituent. Walker explained that she has a file for every House and Senate bill, in which letters are filed accordingly. Therefore it's helpful if you only write about one bill at a time, and always include the bill number when you write or call. Let them know too, who is opposed to your issue. They deal with many, many bills, and she may not even have a chance to open the file until that bill comes up for discussion. When you get an appointment with a legislator, you usually won't get more than 15 minutes (unless perhaps if they know you because you volunteered for their campaign). As your issue moves on to committee and eventually to a floor vote, those are the times to approach the other committee members, and then other legislators.

If you plan to give testimony, it's a good idea to visit your legislator about the issue first. In fact, it might be helpful to visit every committee member before testifying. Walker and

Myers both strongly advised that when you do testify, while it's important to have written testimony to submit, do not just read it. If you are a constituent, Walker takes the time to follow up your testimony with a handwritten note to you. But don't expect this response from every legislator. It sounds as if most are not as good as she is about keeping detailed notes and personally responding.

It was also suggested that you ask a legislator to speak to your group, if you have a particular cause. They will be especially interested if it's a large group of their own constituents, and more likely to be able to accept your invitation if the legislature is out of session.

About Lobbyists... I had occasion to be in Washington, D.C. recently and happened upon an interesting tidbit on a historical sign in front of the Willard Hotel. It seems that President Ulysses Grant used to hang out in the lobby there. Folks started to notice this and found it was a good place to approach him about their favorite political issues. And thus the term "lobbyist" was born! My dictionary defines lobby as "one of two anterooms of a British parliamentary chamber to which members go to vote during a division." Which leaves us to ponder, to which of these two cases the term was first applied.

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RECYCLING ADVOCATES

Membership Application

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**Your membership contribution to RA is tax-deductible to the full extent of the law.*

Upcoming Events

June 5, 7:30 p.m. Institute for the Northwest 2002 Evening Lecture Series, Dr. Allen Hammond, "Which World? Scenarios for the 21st Century." Lecture will be followed by a catered reception. First Congregational Church, 1126 SW Park Avenue, Portland. For more information, call 503-222-2537 or visit www.inorthwest.org.

June 9, 1-3 p.m. SCRAP Workshop. Rebuilding with Scrap. Build small structures using common construction debris and hand tools. Please pre-register by calling 503-294-0769.

June 23, 1-3 p.m. SCRAP Workshop. Invention Convention. Make an invention to ease your tension. Focus will be on animated sculptures and things that move. Please pre-register by calling 503-294-0769.

June 26, 7:30 p.m. Recycling Advocates Board meeting. For location and information, call 503-777-0909.

July 24, 6:30-9 p.m. Recycling Advocates Annual Meeting. For more information, see the next column.

Obsolete Computers: Problems and Solutions for Consumers

Join us on July 24 for RA's annual membership meeting and public electronics forum. We'll be talking about what makes computers qualify as hazardous waste, the ins and outs of electronics recycling, local options for reuse and recycling, and the longer-term product stewardship solution. In addition, Leslie Byster of the Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition will present, "Exporting Harm," a short video detailing electronics recycling conditions in a Chinese village.

Recycling Advocates members will meet at 6:30 p.m. to elect both the Vice-President and Treasurer of the Board of Directors. We are now accepting nominations for the two-year-term positions; members may nominate themselves. The electronics forum starts at 7 p.m.

We hope to see you and your friends on July 24, 6:30-9 p.m. at Metro, Room 370, 600 NE Grand, Portland. Contact Tanya Schaefer at 503-777-0909 or info@recyclingadvocates.org for more information, to RSVP, or to nominate a Board candidate.

Computer Energy Use - Addendum

In last month's issue, RA highlighted EZConserve, a local company that focuses on reducing computer energy use. The article made reference to Metro area recycling professionals; however, no one at EZConserve is associated with Metro regional government.

The article mischaracterized "hibernate state." A computer in hibernate state is shut down. It remembers where the user was, what they were doing and returns there on startup. It also starts up much faster than from the "off" state.

Users can determine if a computer supports hibernate mode by doing the following: right-click on the desktop and select "properties." Choose "screen saver." Then click the "settings" button. Under "power management" tab, users can review and set power management options. Hibernate will be an option here, if it is supported.



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