



# RECYCLING ADVOCATES

November 2005

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

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## Is Portland Ready?

### Where the City Stands on Curbside Collection Expansion

by Katy Daily

The City of Beaverton recently announced tentative plans to start collecting plastic tubs and plastic film bags as part of their move to 60-gallon roll carts for residential curbside recycling. This prompts the question of when residents in Oregon's largest city will be able to do the same.

According to Bruce Walker, Solid Waste and Recycling Program Manager for the City of Portland, the City is in the early stages of pursuing an expansion of the types of materials that can be collected but right now there are no immediate plans for expansion of Portland's curbside recycling service.

There are three primary concerns that need to be addressed before the Office of Sustainable



Development will recommend adding new materials that can be collected curbside: 1) are there reliable (preferably domestic) markets for the collected materials, 2) can the materials be col-

lected using the current yellow bin program, and 3) can the Material Recovery Facilities (or MRFs) handle the materials?

The good news is that the reliability of both the foreign and domestic markets for recycled #2 (HDPE) and #5 (PP) tubs and #2 and #4 film packaging are becoming increasingly stable. According to the preliminary draft of a study commissioned by Metro and conducted by Moore Recycling Associates, there is an excellent domestic market for film, and sufficient domestic demand for recycled margarine tubs and yogurt containers for the Metro region.

Establishing that there are stable markets for recycled materials is an extremely important consideration before adding those materials to any curbside program. Should markets turn out to be intermittent, then the material would have to be warehoused until markets improve. Obviously, if markets prove to be too weak, then illegal dumping could become a problem, undermining the public confidence in our recycling system.

The feasibility of collecting the new materials curbside is also an important consideration when expanding a recycling program. With Portland's cur-

rent system of using yellow bins, lighter items like film bags and yogurt containers may blow around and create a litter problem. Currently, Beaverton is considering collecting these materials because they would be able to roll out these additions when they move to 60-gallon roll carts for single-family residential recyclers. Portland may determine it is better to wait for a change in the

way Portlanders set out their recyclables.

The final consideration is whether the area MRFs can handle new materials. Although the market for recycled plastic film is ex-

cellent, it poses a significant challenge for sorters. Because of its weight and properties, it tends to jam up machines and is hard to control. It is especially a problem because everything Portlanders recycle curbside is co-mingled and needs to be sorted by the MRFs (except glass).

The bottom line is that the City of Portland is currently researching what it would take to expand curbside recycling but there are no immediate plans to include plastic tubs and film in the curbside mix.

Recycling Advocates is tracking the issue and we will let you know when it is time for public involvement. ■

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## Recycling's Effect on Global Warming

Henry Ferland, the US Environmental Protection Agency's program coordinator on the effects of recycling programs on global climate change, has documented the often-overlooked energy savings and greenhouse gas emissions reductions that recycling provides to our country. These savings and reductions happen by reducing the industrial emissions created by the massive energy and chemical needs of converting raw materials into goods ready for production, and the reduction of emissions from landfills and waste-to-energy facilities.

Turning bauxite into aluminum can sheet takes 14 times more energy than melting old cans to make new ones. Recycling a ton of soda bottles saves the equivalent of 430 gallons of gasoline. Recycling a ton of newspaper should save the equivalent of 135 gallons of gasoline.

Mr. Ferland has even calculated that if all the recycling currently being done in America today were to stop tonight, the nation would waste 11.9 billion gallons of gasoline by putting all this valuable reusable and recyclable material in the ground.

Below are some of the URLs for documents that Henry Ferland has worked on related to recycling and energy conservation:

### 1. Warm Model & Recycled Content Tools

<http://yosemite.epa.gov/OAR/globalwarming.nsf/content/ActionsWasteTools.html>

### 2. Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Management of Selected Materials in Municipal Solid Waste

<http://yosemite.epa.gov/OAR/globalwarming.nsf/content/ActionsWasteToolsSWMGHGreport.html#Report%20Sections>

### 3. Climate Change and Waste: Reducing Waste Can Make a Difference

<http://www.epa.gov/epaoswer/non-hw/muncpl/ghg/folder.htm> ■

## Short Bits

**Far West Fibers**, 5525 SE 28<sup>th</sup>, has started accepting #4, #5 and #6 block styrofoam. There is a \$5 drop-off charge. Only the SE 28th location of Far West Fibers is accepting the block styrofoam.

## RECYCLING ADVOCATES

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## Metro Recycling Information hotline: (503) 234-3000.

The hotline provides information and referrals to serve the greater Portland metropolitan area. It features real people with fast, friendly answers to your recycling, disposal and waste prevention questions. Call them (503) 234-3000 8:30am-5:00pm Monday through Saturday or use their interactive "find a recycler page", <http://www.metro-region.org/article.cfm?ArticleID=1383>.

Recycling  
Advocates  
is proud to  
be a  
member of  Earth Share  
OF OREGON

## From the President with Betty Patton

### The Advantage of Being Connected

Oregon's Legislative session ended this year late in the summer. There were some bills that we were following and some we were heavily supporting.



One thing I learned from this session: it pays to know your legislator. The man who represents me in the Oregon House lives right up the street. We met when he was campaigning door to door, and we have continued to be friends. I chat with him at party fundraisers and town hall meetings, and we include each other on personal party invitation lists. When I email or call him about a piece of legislation, he and his staff know who I am. That helps.

On the other hand, I have never met my state senator. Senatorial districts are considerably larger, so we don't have quite as much opportunity to cross paths. That's no excuse. I should have gotten to know her and it might have made a bit of difference in this last session; I don't know. Here's the situation:

One of the bills that received heavy Recycling Advocates members' attention and support was SB 740, the electronic scrap bill. This bill did not make it out of committee in part because my state senator voted against it. Her objection was based on false information. If I knew her better, maybe, just maybe, I could have talked her through it. Or, at least tried to.

Now is the time for us to get to know our legislators. Check on-line for their local contact information at <http://www.leg.state.or.us/findlegsltr/findset.htm>. Find out if they have any public gatherings during this off-season. Email them and thank them for their hard work and service. Ask to be put on their distribution list for events and activities. Meet them. Shake their hand. Introduce yourselves. Talk to them and listen to them. Then use this connection and knowledge to inform them and encourage them next session.

Trust me; you'll make a difference.

Betty

**Are Companies  
"Greenwashing" with  
Claims about Recycled  
Products?**

by Betty McArdle

**Buying Recycled Products**

There's more to recycling than setting out your recyclables at the curb. In order to make recycling economically feasible, we must buy recycled products and packaging. When we buy recycled products, we create an economic incentive for recyclable materials to be collected, manufactured, and marketed as new products. Buying recycled has both economic and environmental benefits. Purchasing products made from, or packaged in, recycled materials saves resources for future generations.

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) issued a series of guidelines, known as "Green Guides," about environmental product claims in 1998. There are two guides for consumers: "Eco-Speak: A User's Guide to the Language of Recycling" and "Sorting Out Green Advertising Claims." For businesses, the FTC provides "Complying with Environmental Marketing Guides" and "Environmental Marketing Claims." (<http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/grnrule/guides980427.htm>.)

The FTC will contact corporations that do not adhere to the guidelines, but the FTC allows products to remain on the shelf for months until the company depletes its existing "misleading" packaging supply..

**Tips for Consumers**

When you evaluate environmental claims in advertising and on product labels, look for specific information. Determine whether the claims apply to the product, the packaging, or both.

**Recycled:** If a label says "recycled," check how much of the product or package is recycled. Unless the product or package contains 100 percent recycled materials, the label must specify how much is recycled. Some labels on "recycled" products tell where the recycled material comes from. "Post-consumer" material comes from previously used products, such as newspapers, shipping cartons, plastic



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bottles, glass containers, and aluminum cans. "Pre-consumer" material is basically manufacturing waste.

"Recycled" products are made from items recovered or separated from the "waste stream" that are melted down or ground up into raw materials and then used to make new products.

"Re-used" products may be those that are used, rebuilt, reconditioned, or remanufactured. If a product is labeled "recycled" because it contains used, rebuilt, reconditioned, or remanufactured parts, the label must say so - unless it's obvious to the consumer.

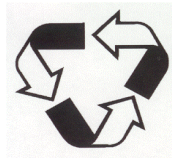
**Recyclable:** Recyclable claims on labels and advertising mean that the manufacturer or seller of the products has proof that the products can be collected and used again or made into useful products. Some companies simply may say "Please Recycle" on their products. Such claims will be relevant to you only if these products are collected for recycling in your community, either through curbside pickup programs or drop-off programs.

**Eco-safe/Earth Smart:** Vague claims may sound warm and fuzzy, but generally offer little information of value. Claims that a product or service is "environmentally friendly," "environmentally safe," or "eco-safe" are unhelpful. These phrases alone do not provide the specific information you need to compare products, packaging, or

services on their environmental merits. Look for claims that give some substance to the claim.

**Reduced materials:** Some products and packages state that they use less material than former or competing products or packaging. To be meaningful, such claims should say exactly what's been reduced, by how much, and compared to what. For example, a claim like "20 percent less waste than our previous package" gives you more information than "20 percent less waste."

**Symbols:** Certain symbols placed on consumer products tell you whether a product or package is recyclable (depending on your community program) or that the product or package is made from recycled materials.



Many products display this "universal" recycling symbol, often called the three-chasing-arrows symbol. Some companies use it to mean that the product or package is made of recycled materials; others use it to mean that the product or package is recyclable. Some communities don't accept for recycling every product or package that bears the symbol. Check with your local hauler/recycler for specifics.

*Based on material at [#http://www.ecopledge.com/ecopledge.asp?id2=3433&id3=ecopledge&id4=EPMP](http://www.ecopledge.com/ecopledge.asp?id2=3433&id3=ecopledge&id4=EPMP) and <http://www.epa.gov/epaoswer/non-hw/muncpl/reduce.htm>.*

## Upcoming Events and Workshops

**Carol Mollet of SCRAP\*,  
The School and Community  
Reuse Action Project**

**will speak at:**

Tryon Creek State Park  
**November 20, 2:00-3:00pm**  
11321 SW Terwilliger Blvd

Complimentary food and refreshments from local businesses using organic sources following lecture.

\*SCRAP's mission is to promote creative reuse and environmentally sustainable behavior by providing educational programs and affordable materials to the community.

VISIT SCRAP at 3901A N Williams  
(503) 294-0769  
Wed-Sat 11 AM to 6 PM  
Sun 12 PM to 5 PM

## BECOME A MASTER RECYCLER

The first session of the winter Master Recycler course begins

**Tuesday, January 10, 2006  
7-9:30 p.m.**

at Metro , 600 NE Grand, Portland.

The popular eight-week program will continue on seven additional Tuesdays in January and February and includes two half-day Saturday field trips.

Registration deadline is **December 16, 2005**. Don't wait long; only a few spaces are left for the Winter session. Find applications at <http://www.masterrecycler.org/classes.html>

A \$50 course fee includes all ma-

## America Recycles Day November 15, 2005

Visit [www.americarecyclesday.org](http://www.americarecyclesday.org) for info about activities and events.

## Fix-It Fair

**Saturday, November 19  
8:30 a.m.-2:00 p.m.  
Self Enhancement Inc.  
3920 N. Kerby Ave**

**Workshops  
Exhibits  
Giveaways**

Info: Call: 503-823-7581

Call: 503-823-7581

Email: [FixItFair@ci.portland.or.us](mailto:FixItFair@ci.portland.or.us)  
<http://www.sustainableportland.org/>

## RA Board meeting

You are welcome to join us at the next Recycling Advocates board meeting:

Monday, November 28, 7:30-9:30pm  
For location and information call  
503-777-0909.

*Copied on 100% post-consumer content recycled paper*

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