

AOR Forum Wrap-Up: Plastic Bags & Urban Wood

AOR's forum last month gave a group of 120 participants the opportunity to learn and talk about two important and timely topics: plastic bag issues and urban wood recycling. Markets Chair Jeff Murray and Education Chair Ronda Chapman Duer did an extraordinary job of pulling together representatives from government, environmental-protection organizations, the American Chemistry Council, MRFs, and plastic and wood processors to present information and policy viewpoints that kept forum participants engaged in lively discussion throughout the breaks and lunch.

The presentations are posted on AOR's website, but here are a few highlights to give you a flavor of the day.

Plastic Bags

Chris Thomas, SP Recycling Corp., demonstrated with facts and photos the impacts of plastic bags at MRFs. In 2009 they hand-pulled 50 tons of film plastic every month from the incoming curbside material. Plus, workers cut off about 400 pounds of retail and grocery bags that become wrapped around the screens every day. Dealing with the impacts of plastic bag film accounts for 20-30 percent of labor costs. During the Q & A, an AOR member asked Chris why MRFs aren't looking at changes in MRF operations. Chris said technology is not available right now, and it shouldn't fall just to the MRFs to fund solutions.

David Allaway of Oregon DEQ pointed out that there are a variety of issues related to plastics: litter (land and marine), CO2 emissions,

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recycled content and recyclability, MRF impacts, and trade-offs when comparing plastic to paper bags. When asked why DEQ isn't more focused on "doing something about plastic bags," he said that "Everyone loves to hate packaging, but a serious push for sustainability has to address products." David summarized some strategies for reducing plastic bag impacts, including using different kinds of plastics, voluntary and mandatory reduction programs and incentives.

Tara Gallagher with Surfrider talked about the impacts of plastics on marine life. Her presentation included satellite photos of "The Great Pacific Garbage Patch," just one of several large ocean "gyres." Tara showed photos that demonstrate the impacts on marine life who mistake plastic for food (plastic bags look like jellyfish, and bags and other plastics break down into plankton-sized particles.) Surfrider is focused on education and outreach as well as consumption and cleanups. The Portland chapter is working on a "Ban the Bag campaign" to impose a ban or mandatory fee on single-use plastic bags.

Senator Mark Hass talked about his conversations with MRFs and grocers, including Fred Meyer, who has expressed interest in supporting a plastic bag fee/ban. Sen. Hass said there wasn't enough traction in 2009 to introduce a bill, but will be issuing one in early February. One AOR member expressed disappointment and concern that there is a loss of environmental leadership

**Group chats at forum**

in national politics, asked Hass to help foster more state and national leadership.

Tim Shestek with American Chemistry Council said ACC is focused on working with jurisdictions and grocers to encourage and promote the recycling of plastic bags. He highlighted some of the programs nationally and internationally: take-back and drop-off programs, bans, taxes, and voluntary strategies. Tim said that sometimes there are unintended consequences with bag bans, such as people buying plastic bags to use for trashcan liners, or grocers getting rid of in-store recycling opportunities for plastic bags and films. Tim noted ACC and others are working to centralize plastic bag and film information, such as www.plasticbagrecycling.org, a one-stop source of

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**The Abernethy Center, Oregon City**

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**Loretta Pickerell
and Bruce Walker corner
Senator Mark Hass**

information for consumers and retailers and partners.

Matt Englesby with Trex shared information about his company's recycling of 200,000 tons of polyethylene annually to make decking, fencing and other products. Trex is interested in building long-term partnerships with grocers, schools, local governments and nonprofits to create outreach and educational programs to encourage recycling. Matt noted that some changes to how plastic bags are manufactured (oxo-biodegradable bags) pose unknown impacts on Trex products.

Blair Pollock, Orange County, North Carolina, talked about a student Capstone program focused on building a business film and bag recovery program. It became evident early on that hands-on, one-store-at-a-time strategies are the most effective. Some recommendations: Get management support and approval; communicate with business owners in-person or on

the phone rather than e-mail; identify and enroll participants; provide tools; make a big deal of it – use articles and PR to get the word out to the community; let the businesses know how they are doing; build spin-off programs (bubble wrap, peanuts).

In the Q & A panel following the presentations, a number of suggestions were offered: Make plastic bags more durable and reusable; a "Bag for Life" program (retailer replaces your plastic bag when it wears out); using social marketing techniques, such as asking each customer if they "brought their bag today"; curbside bag recycling using designated containers or putting bags in a single bag.

Urban wood recycling

Dan Walsh, Northwest Wood, provided a history of urban wood recycling, including market fluctuations, educating the construction industry about on-site recycling, the impact of the "Black Liquor Tax" on hog fuel consumption, and the BCAP program, which essentially subsidizes chips, bark dust, saw dust, woody residuals from logging and some agricultural byproducts. "We need some help if we are going to keep

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Senator Mark Hass talks about Fred Meyer

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urban wood market alive. It's important to have a level playing field and be able to compete with other material," he said.

Gordon Culbertson with Forest2Market said that in Oregon and Washington there are strong mandates that will encourage use of green power. To meet standards for renewable power, wood resources are going to play an increasing role. In Oregon, more wood fiber will be needed. Industrial private forest owners have a keen interest in wood biomass. BCAP and other incentives will increase the profit margin potential and pressure urban wood. BCAP payments will encourage forest biomass production over the long haul. However, in times of fuel surplus, subsidies drive down prices instead of providing incentives for development. BCAP rules are being looked at and changes are likely.

Bryce Jacobson, Metro, talked about wood recycling in the Metro region. Wood accounts for about 17 percent of all recycling in the region. There are 30 local recyclers/processors; recycling gate fees range from free to \$40/ton. Bryce talked about wood-recovery trends. Hog fuel value peaked in 2007, and composting has

fallen. Currently, hog fuel is 95% of where region's wood waste is going. Composting, salvage and reuse is less than 1 percent, paper mill furnish and erosion-control products account for 4 percent.

Wade Mosby, Collins Companies, said he has conflicting feelings about the BCAP program. The rules are poorly written, he said. His company was one of the first four qualifying facilities to sign up, now there are 400 nationwide, 30 in Oregon. "This is going to be an expensive program. On one side, I participate, and on the other side I run a particle board plant and our prices are going up." Wade commented on the impact on jobs: a typical co-generation plant has a lot fewer employees than a particle board plant. "I think it is a good program, but we need to rewrite the rules."

Will Gehr, S & H Logging, said his company has two yards in the Metro area and they take in about half the wood waste generated in the Metro area. "Our markets for wood right now are fairly stable. We don't get subsidized in any way. BCAP program hasn't had any impact on our prices. But it is likely to have an impact

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Urban wood panel

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soon. It will put a damper on what mills will want to pay on non-forest residues. I think that there is going to be a lull for a couple of years in urban wood prices until the demand gets reinvigorated, and once that happens, I think the market for urban wood waste will get stronger and stronger.”

Matt Krumenauer, Oregon Dept. of Energy, talked about tools to promote renewable energy. BETC – Business Energy Tax Credit – includes recycling and alternative fuels. The program has grown quite a bit, he said, and has attracted scrutiny. The Governor requested changes, including how multiple facilities are handled, how monies owed to the state are handled, and job creation. Temporary rules were issued in November, and the first public hearing is scheduled for the end of March. He also talked about the Biomass Tax Credit for materials collected to produce energy. Draft rules are on the state website.

ECONOMIC GAIN THROUGH ENVIRONMENTAL INNOVATION

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**Mark your calendars:
Sustainable Oregon 2010 Annual Conference**

June 17 – 19, 2010

Salem Conference Center
Salem, Oregon.



Take a look at your new website!

The newly revamped AOR website (www.aorr.org) includes a fresh look and improved navigational structure, a blog section for providing news and updates, up-to-date forum and conference details, a calendar of events and a job resources page.

The content revisions and site design were driven by results of the membership survey conducted in September. Based on your input, a website subcommittee of board and other members

– Alexis Allen, Alison Briggs, Laurel Bates, Lee Barrett, Lindsey Maser, Scott Klag and Jesse Engum

– went to work. Jesse coordinated the committee and Richard Lee-Berman provided technical recommendations and then implemented the changes to the website.

“The committee worked hard to implement changes based on what we heard from AOR members. We’re committed to keeping the site up-to-date so that it continues to meet the needs of our membership. We welcome suggestions for organizations to include in the links and job resources pages, as well as events to include in the calendar,” he said.

One of the aspects of the website Jesse is most excited about is the blogs section. There are four blogs, each written by a primary contributor. The blogs are Electronics Recycling (Jerry Powell), Organics (Meredith Sorensen), Plastics (Patty Moore), and Recycling and Solid Waste Practice and Policy (Scott Klag). Guest contributions are welcome.

Jesse says the committee is also considering how to offer a membership directory on the site. “There are a number of challenges to address, but we heard the membership’s interest in this feature and we are working on a solution.”



Getting to know the 2009 Recycler of the Year awardees

The eight individuals and businesses recognized with 2009 Recycler of the Year awards exemplify innovation, creativity, passion and dedication.

RECYCLER OF THE YEAR – GOVERNMENT LORI HAYHURST, Oregon State Legislature

Reducing printing costs and making a large company or organization a more sustainable operation can be a daunting task, especially when that organization is a state government.

Lori Hayhurst – Supervisor, Purchasing and Contracting, Legislative Administration – was nominated for the Recycler of the Year Award after Alex Cuyler, Lane County Intergovernmental Relations Manager, made a trip to the State Capitol. “I expected to see large amounts of paper being generated and wasted. My assumptions were incorrect,” says Alex. “Ms. Hayhurst had completely redesigned the print shop and the procedures for bill delivery, and was actively promoting an agenda of waste prevention.”

Print-on-demand

Paper recycling was nothing new at the Capitol – at the end of the 2007 Legislative Session, Lori Hayhurst and her staff in the Publications and Distribution section had recycled approximately two tons of paper. But there was still a great deal of paper being used that didn’t need to be.

The idea of printing documents on request, rather than maintaining a supply of documents in anticipation of a request, had been in general discussion for several years. When Lori was assigned to supervise the Publications and Distribution section, she dedicated herself to creating a “Print-on-demand” system that would avoid the need to generate – and recycle – so much paper. To do this, Lori worked with Legislative Information Systems staff, the Chief Clerk of the House of Representatives, the Secretary of the Senate, and staff at the State Print Plant.

Print on Demand has resulted in a 49% reduction in the number of impressions and a 35% reduction in printing costs when comparing the 2007 session to the 2009 session (see chart). This translates to over 8,775 fewer reams of paper in just the 2009 legislative session alone.

“The Print on Demand project allows Capitol staff to offer high quality customer service using less space while reducing costs and eliminating a large volume of printed paper,” says Scott Burgess, Legislative Administrator, whose office chartered the Capitol Sustainability Program.

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Recycler of the Year Awardees

Award *continued from previous page*

Employees drive more sustainability efforts

The Capitol Sustainability Program continues to actively pursue opportunities as they arise. For example, non-recyclable packaging materials are saved and given to non-profit organizations that can reuse them. Binders and other unneeded office supplies have been collected for distribution to schools. Employees' ideas for improved sustainability, efficiency, health, effectiveness, and cost savings are welcomed, and ideas that appear feasible and beneficial are tested and then implemented. A few examples of employee-suggested ideas are flush valve retrofits and occupancy sensing power strips.

Vicki Brammeier, Acting Facilities Manager and Lori's supervisor, says Oregonians reap the benefits of Lori's efforts and the staff's ongoing work to make government operations more sustainable. "The greatest success story is the savings to Oregon's taxpayers in dollars and environmental benefits."

General Comparison - Legislative Session Impressions - 2007 - 2009

MONTH	2007 Impressions	2007 Cost	2009 Impressions	2009 Cost	2009 Impression % vs 2007	2009 Cost% vs 2007
PreSession	2,696,875	\$79,918	1,246,255	\$54,801	-54%	-31%
January	1,724,295	\$51,606	1,005,192	\$36,743	-42%	-29%
February	3,780,790	\$105,331	2,096,065	\$74,954	-45%	-29%
March	5,623,792	\$154,014	2,664,965	\$101,433	-53%	-34%
April	4,167,351	\$115,201	2,205,526	\$78,550	-47%	-32%
May	5,414,067	\$147,738	2,183,081	\$78,552	-60%	-47%
June	4,431,767	\$122,961	2,242,326	\$78,209	-49%	-36%
GRAND TOTAL	27,838,937	\$776,769	13,643,410	\$503,242	-51%	-35%
AVG / MONTH	3,976,991	\$110,967	1,949,059	\$71,892	-51%	-35%
AVG/DAY	215,806	\$6,021	109,147	\$4,026	-49%	-33%

Board briefs

- ◆ As you may have seen, AOR has a new website. A number of people deserve another mention for their hard work over the last few months. They include:
 - Alexis Allan – *Northwest Energy Alliance*
 - Lee Barrett – *Ecologistics*
 - Laurel Bates – *Free Geek*
 - Alison Briggs – *Free Geek*
 - Scott Klag – *Metro*
 - Richard Lee-Berman – *Environmental Practices*
 - Lindsey Maser – *City of Portland*
 - The AOR Board
- ◆ We are committed to keeping the site fresh with current and useful content. Your contributions will be essential to this effort. If you see something that needs to be updated, or if you have ideas for news articles, research, events, or links that could serve our membership, please let me know.
- ◆ Part of AOR's business plan includes the sale of advertisements on our new website. We anticipate a significant boost to traffic to our new site, and this could be a great time to improve the profile of your organization. Contact Betty Patton for more information, 503-233-3056.
- ◆ Save the date for our next conference, Sustainable Oregon 2010. This conference will be held in Salem, June 17th through the 19th. The conference planning committees are well underway, and we expect to offer a dynamic and informative event this year.
- ◆ Into the second month of 2010, it's time for you to consider who or what organization did something exceptional in 2009. Who did something innovative; who showed leadership in waste prevention and recycling; who deserves to be recognized? In March, I will solicit nominations for the 2010 Recycler of the Year Awards, which will be awarded at our Sustainable Oregon conference. Consider now who deserves recognition. Nomination documents will soon be posted on our website.



Upcoming Board Meetings

Open to all members

February

Date: Monday, February 22

Time: 3:00 p.m.

Place: Metro, 600 NE Grand Avenue, Portland

Agenda: legislative issues, conference planning & sponsorships.

RSVP: Please RSVP at mail@aORr.org



PSU Recycles!

Portland State University has been making significant strides in waste reduction and recycling through education, outreach, data collection, improved signage and enhanced partnerships with dining services and student groups

Project Highlights:

- PSU Recycles! staffs tables at residence halls and assists students with sorting and recycling the large amount of packaging and waste that typically fill college dumpsters during move-in week.
- At the end of each term students are encouraged to Chuck-It-For-Charity. Gently used clothes and household goods are collected from residence hall drop sites by recycling specialists from PSU Recycles!
- Last September, PSU Recycles! hosted the first Recycling Summit – an open-invitation information session featuring Pete Chism, Business Recycling Specialist from the City of Portland, and an interactive, recycling super quiz.
- The Bin Consolidation Project uses the City of Portland's best management practices to provide equal opportunity for recycling. Each trashcan is now being paired with a mixed recycling and a glass-recycling bin.
- Last summer, training in waste minimization was provided to 50 Resident Assistants (RAs) who manage each floor of the resident halls. PSU Recycles!
- PSU Recycles! has helped improve recycling through tailored signage for specialized materials in both the architecture and civil engineering departments, traditionally large generators of waste.
- As part of efforts to combat heavy contamination of recycling by single-use coffee cups, the education



PSU Recycles!

PSU *continued from previous page*

campaign “Give up the Cup” seeks to inform the PSU community that coffee cups are never recyclable and help encourage the use of reusable mugs through signage on recycling bins, social networking on Facebook and websites and videos shown in heavy-use buildings.

- ♦ To assist the active community of campus Green Teams better manage office waste, PSU Recycles! performs waste audits and office walk-throughs. Results are then shared through a PowerPoint presentation at all-staff meetings.
- ♦ A successful kitchen compost program for PSU food vendors was initiated over two years ago with the help of the City of Portland. Building on the infrastructure in place, PSU Recycles! has started moving the compost bins out from behind the counters to greater prominence by monitoring post-consumer composting at catered events.
- ♦ During 14 new student orientations last summer, 1,219 pounds of compostable waste was successfully diverted from the landfill. Aramark Dining is committed to increasing the sustainability of its operations: completely converting to Cedar Grove-approved compostable products, providing more buffet-style meals to reduce packaging and all but eliminating bottled water at events.
- ♦ PSU Recycles! worked closely with the Student Activities and Leadership Programs to drastically reduce material waste generated at Portland State’s annual student resource fair, Party in the Park. With 5,000 attendees receiving free food and drink in a large, outdoor, public space,

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**PSU resident assistant
training**

PSU *continued from previous page*

“We hope that the work we are doing will encourage other schools and businesses to keep the momentum going,” says Christel Eichner, PSU Recycles! Resource Management Coordinator.

PSU Recycles! is dedicated to creating a sustainable campus by reducing waste, expanding recycling opportunities, and increasing campus recycling and composting rates. The college maintains a website – www.pdx.edu/sustainability/psu_recycles.html – to keep students, staff, faculty and the community involved and informed.



PSU office waste audit



PSU Chuck it for Charity group

The Recycling Bin

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News and events from around the state and country



Waste & Recycling News carries story on AOR Forum

AOR received a bit of broad industry exposure when the January 20 online publication carried a brief news story announcing the forum. Also, Waste & Recycling News has added two biweekly electronic newsletters: Landfill Report and Residential Recycling Report. Landfill Report will provide landfill-related news items every other Tuesday. Residential Recycling Report goes out every other Wednesday with the latest news relating to residential recycling issues. The two newsletters join Scrap Report, an e-newsletter begun last year to deliver scrap-related information. Scrap Report mails out every other Monday. To subscribe to any of the newsletters, go to www.wasterecyclingnews.com/newsmail/signup.html.



Recycling prices move up – A story in Resource Recycling e-newsletter reports that:

“Recycling processors are smiling again.” The value of many secondary materials has moved higher in the past several weeks. Recovered paper prices rose by \$25 to \$50 per ton in late December and early January, fueled by robust export demand during a period of low generation. Buyers report a lack of bales throughout the supply chain, which is giving

support for predictions of continuing price improvement.

Cold weather in much of the country has led to just a trickle of scrap being received by American scrap metal processors. As a result, domestic and foreign steel mills are scrambling to acquire sufficient material to keep their furnaces operating. This has helped push prices up handsomely.

Virgin plastic producers are again seeking more for their products due to rising feedstock costs. This has provided an opportunity for recycled resin makers to also move prices upward.

One constraint to improving markets is the lack of overseas shipping containers. Shipping lines have few containers available, and the empty containers they do have are being provided first to shippers of finished goods, rather than firms moving lower-valued recyclable materials, which typically pay a lower fee.



“Beyond Recycling: Composting Food Scraps and Soiled Paper” report

The next generation of recycling is the composting of food scraps and soiled paper, which 121 cities have shown to raise diversion from one-third to more than two-thirds of the municipal solid wastes that the U.S. generates. A new 79-page report from the Center for a Competitive Waste Industry provides recycle program managers with a guidebook of best practices for expanding beyond recycling, and composters with advice on how to process food scraps. Download the report at http://beyondrecycling.org/pdf_files/FinalReport.pdf.

3 CMA Regional Conference – Gresham **Friday, February 5**

Sharpen your communications tools and techniques at this annual conference presented by City-County Communications & Marketing Association. The sessions will be held in the Gresham City Hall Conference Center. Conference details available at www.3cma.org/index.aspx?nid=459.

U of O Sustainability Leadership Program workshop – Portland **Friday, February 5**

Forming and Facilitating Sustainability Teams: Engaging and Training Employees.
Offered at University of Oregon/White Stag Block 152. Information at <http://sustain.uoregon.edu>.

T hinking Outside the Blue Box Conference – Charlotte, North Carolina **February 8–9, 2010**

Explore innovative programs and continue to “Think Outside the Blue Box.” The 2010 SWANA conference includes “Case Studies in Commercial Recycling” – Decision Points in Developing Mandatory Recycling Ordinances; Measuring Recycling: Commercial Recycling Hidden Contribution to Recycling Rates; and LEEDing the Way to Better Commercial Waste and Recycling Audits. The keynote will be delivered by Heidi Sanborn, Executive Director of the California Product Stewardship Council and the National Outreach Director for the Product Policy Institute. Learn more at www.thinkingoutsidethebluebox.org.

U of O Sustainability Leadership Program workshop – Portland **Friday, February 19**

Power of Purchasing: Sustainable Procurement. Offered at University of Oregon/White Stag Block 152. Information at <http://sustain.uoregon.edu>.

U of O Sustainability Leadership Program workshop – Portland **Friday, February 26**

Accounting for Sustainability: Reporting Principles and Concepts. Offered at University of Oregon/White Stag Block 152. Information at <http://sustain.uoregon.edu>

P lastics Recycling 2010 Conference – Austin, TX **March 2-3**

Resource Recycling, Inc., publisher of Plastics Recycling Update and Resource Recycling, invites you to attend the premier plastics recycling conference of North America. Make your hotel reservations by February 8 to receive the special conference rate of \$169 plus taxes. More info at www.plasticsrecycling.com.

Calendar *continued from previous page*

Residential Recycling Conference – Chicago, IL March 23-24

Discover who's speaking, who's exhibiting and more at the Residential Recycling Conference. A full agenda is also available at www.residentialrecyclingconference.com. The Residential Recycling Conference is brought to you by Waste & Recycling News and Republic Services Inc.

Mark your calendars for the AOR 2010 Sustainable Oregon conference! June 17–19, 2010

Salem Conference Center, Salem, Oregon. More details to come in the months ahead.

Green Drinks – Various locations in Oregon

Every month people who work in the environmental field meet up at informal sessions known as Green Drinks. In Oregon, Green Drinks get-togethers are held in the following cities: Ashland, Bend, Eugene, Hood River, Lincoln City, Medford, Newport, Portland, The Dalles. Find the links for dates and locations in your city at www.greendrinks.org/index.php?country=USA&state=OR.

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