

# Oregon Commingled Recycling System Improvements Workgroup – Process & Progress

Association of Oregon Recyclers June 2011 Conference  
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# Background

- Workgroup convened early 2009 to continue a discussion begun as part of EPA process to address recovery of curbside recyclables in Oregon
- DEQ facilitated; participatory process with diverse group of stakeholders
- Tasked with examining commingled waste material management system and generating recommendations for improvements to system

# Goal

Determined by Workgroup:

We want fewer contaminants entering the recycling stream and more recyclables going to the appropriate markets.

# Decisions

- DEQ, through contractor, conduct materials characterization study at MRFs
- Subgroups research/make recommendations on:
  - Education & curbside feedback
  - Difficult to handle materials
  - System improvement
  - Measures and statewide goals

# Strongly Supported Recommendations

- Create a simple and consistent statewide message campaign and feedback to determine impact on recycling behavior.
- Create list of what local governments are allowing in curbside programs and what MRFs are able to process.
- Produce summary of and options for difficult to recycle materials.
- Calculate the environmental benefit from GHG perspective and revise goals as appropriate.

# Findings from Materials Characterization Study

- 92% to 94% of what gets sent to MRFs is properly sorted.
- Concerns remain about some of the high value (environmentally) materials that are missed in sorting process (plastic bottles, aluminum).
- The majority of aseptics/gabletops are not properly sorted.

# Progress

Since last Workgroup meeting held November 2010:

- Product stewardship efforts
- Legislation related to plastic
- Education on plastic film
- Support for collection consistency
- Increased collection efforts for difficult to recycle materials
- Changes at MRFs
- Research on BMPs at MRFs
- Long-term planning efforts related to material impacts

# Educational Needs

- Strong support for cohesive, consistent state-wide message
- Increased education to consumers on problematic commodities
- Diverse messaging
- Leverage good existing materials and approaches
- How to integrate waste prevention message
- Consider social marketing opportunities