

West Coast Forum on Climate Change, Waste Prevention, Recovery and Disposal

Background:

On September 11 and 12, EPA Regions 9 and 10 hosted the West Coast Forum on Climate Change, Waste Prevention and Recovery and Disposal. The purpose of the Forum was to bring together government stakeholders from western states to identify strategic actions to reduce climate change impacts through improvements to waste prevention, recovery and disposal.

Forum participants identified the work currently occurring on climate change and waste prevention, recovery, and disposal, explored opportunities for collaboration and coordination and formed small workgroups to focus discussion and activity on several key areas. The workgroups will be pursuing the following topic areas: climate and waste communication strategies for both the general public and elected officials, materials management, greenhouse gas (GHG) inventories, research needs, integrated product stewardship and extended producer responsibility (EPR), and programs in Alaska. Summaries of the workgroups' goals and expected outputs are provided below.

The participants agreed that it would be important to develop a network to share information, use common language and messaging, be consistent, help others who are starting out and encourage and learn from those who are out in front on this issue. The workgroups will be meeting on a regular basis to move their work forward. Another regional Forum, possibly held in Region 9, was requested in a year to 18 months.

Workgroup Summaries:

Climate Change and Materials Management Communication Workgroup:

Goal: Outreach campaign directed at shifting both consumer behavior and influencing programs and policy.

Expected Outputs:

- Develop messaging/common language
- PowerPoint for local government
- Targeted public education "Top Ten" themes to reduce GHG impacts

Materials Management Workgroup:

Goal: Identify and develop immediate implementation strategies that have a high potential for significant GHG reductions

Expected Outputs:

- Review materials characterization and embodied energy data
- Develop prioritized lists of materials and actions to reduce GHG impacts of these materials

GHG Inventory Workgroup:

Goal: Integrate materials-related emissions (both upstream and downstream) into state and local GHG inventories.

Expected Outputs:

- Incorporate emissions associated with materials consumption and recovery-related emissions reductions into the CARB/CCAR Community Inventory Protocol
- Work with ICLEI and the GHG inventory consulting community to integrate materials-related considerations into state/local government inventory software and inventories
- WARM (Waste Reduction Model) – Evaluate applicability for inventories and support improvements.

Research Workgroup:

Goal: Establish a shared research agenda and develop a strategy to communicate research results, working with an advisory committee and utilizing academic and library resources.

Expected Outputs:

- Develop agenda of prioritized materials/climate research questions
- Identify, annotate and share key research.
- WARM (Waste Reduction Model) – Incorporate research needs to support improvements

Product Stewardship Workgroup:

Goal: Establish and/or harmonize state product stewardship/EPR framework policies and establish the connections between EPR framework policies and reductions in greenhouse gases.

Expected Outputs:

- Research emissions factors of priority EPR products
- Develop Climate/EPR briefing paper
- Coordinate western EPR and Climate/Materials policy initiatives

Alaska Workgroup:

Goal: Utilize the knowledge gained from other states to develop strategies for Alaska. Alaskan strategies need to account for rural communities and transportation limitations.

Expected Outputs:

- Develop data collection and per capita waste generation goals (as opposed to recycling rate goals)
- Develop waste prevention, recovery, and disposal strategies

Note: For more information regarding the West Coast Forum or the Workgroups, please contact the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency contact, Tracy Chellis at r10Westcoastclimate@epa.gov.

West Coast Forum on Climate Change, Waste Prevention, Recovery and Disposal: Joint Statement September, 2008

Fifty-six representatives from 5 western states, and 19 local/regional governments, and EPA (Headquarters, EPA Region 9 and 10), met in Seattle to identify areas of collaborative effort and strategic actions to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions through improvements in waste prevention, recovery, and disposal.

Action on several fronts will identify significant opportunities to reduce GHG emissions. Waste prevention, recycling, composting and other materials/waste management strategies are critical, cost-effective methods that can reduce GHG emissions in the immediate future. However a fundamental shift is required in the way governments, businesses and public view the role of “waste.” Solely focusing on end-of-life solutions of unwanted materials will not maximize GHG reduction. Rather, a change of focus to an upstream **Materials Management systems approach** is necessary.

Participants identified five primary action areas that all types of communities and agencies can use to reduce GHG emissions associated with materials management. A report will be produced in November outlining a strategy and workplan to take the following actions:

A. Incorporate Materials Management into Climate Change Accounting and Inventory Methodologies

Current federal, state, local, ICLEI, and Climate Registry emission inventory protocols do not address most GHG emissions that result from product consumption, and thus grossly undervalue the importance of products and waste prevention and recycling. Current inventories generally show the Waste sector GHG emissions at 3%, yet new systems research shows goods and services production as potentially the largest GHG contributor at 35 - 53%. The current inconsistent treatment of consumption of energy vs. products leads to several undesirable outcomes. Inventories should incorporate a supplement that estimates consumption-related emissions. Organizations developing Climate Plans and inventories should incorporate a supplemental inventory on consumption-related emissions, and highlight the limits of conventional inventory protocols and opportunities to reduce GHG through materials management approaches.

Additionally, participants expressed concern that carbon market rules should not create disincentives or delay early actions and adopters and create conflict between effective policies and carbon marketing. Concern is often raised that the use of regulatory tools, such as banning the disposal of organics from landfilling, will preempt compost and other facilities from qualifying for carbon credits or benefiting from a future potential carbon market.

B. Develop GHG/Materials Management Communication Strategy and Public Outreach

Effective tools, templates, information and messaging needs to be developed and disseminated so governments, not-for-profits, private companies, academics and private citizens more fully understand the connections between consumption, waste, and climate change, and immediately begin to make changes to reduce emissions from materials.

C. Develop a Research Agenda

Materials management GHG research needs should be prioritized and a common research agenda established, along with a clearinghouse to facilitate information transformation and sharing. Research efforts are needed to strengthen Life Cycle Assessment and to support improvements to EPA’s Waste Reduction Model (WARM) and other GHG tools.

D. Prioritize Materials and Materials Management Actions for Immediate Implementation

Waste prevention offers the greatest potential for materials-based GHG reductions. Paper, organics (especially food) and metals contribute to significant greenhouse gas emissions. Recycling, composting

and anaerobic digestion programs for these materials will swiftly contribute to GHG reduction and should be encouraged, optimized and/or implemented.

E. Advance Product Stewardship as a Tool to Address Climate Change

Product and product packaging waste make up 75% of discarded materials. Product Stewardship, or Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), offers an approach to link product and packaging design with environmental impacts so that producers take full life cycle impacts, including end-of-life impacts, into account during the design phase. This has significant potential to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Stakeholders should work to harmonize and establish EPR framework policies.

Attending Organizations

Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation	AK
California EPA	CA
California Air Resources Board	CA
California Department of Conservation	CA
California Integrated Waste Management Board	CA
City of Beaverton	OR
City of Boise	ID
City of Chula Vista	CA
City of Eugene	OR
City of Portland	OR
City of Spokane	WA
City of Tacoma	WA
City of Tucson	AZ
Clackamas County	OR
US EPA Headquarters	DC
US EPA Region 10	WA
US EPA Region 9	CA
King County Solid Waste Division	WA
Lane County	OR
Marion County	OR
Metro Regional Government	OR
Mohave Desert and Mountain Recycling Authority	CA
Municipality of Anchorage	AK
Nevada Division of Environmental Protection	NV
Oregon Department of Environmental Quality	OR
Seattle Public Utilities	WA
Snohomish County	WA
Stopwaste.org Alameda County	CA
Washington County	OR
Washington State Department of Ecology	WA

Note: The information contained in this Joint Statement represents the discussion that occurred at the meeting. It does not necessarily represent the views or policies of any of the individual organizations listed above.