



## Northwest Product Stewardship Council

### **2010 Electronics Subcommittee Issue Paper**

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#### **The Issue**

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Electronic products such as televisions, computers, printers and household appliances have a significant impact on our environment due to a number of factors: they contain toxic components such as lead, mercury, cadmium and chromium; their production consumes large amounts of energy and natural resources; they have a short life span due to rapid technological advances; there are large numbers of them in circulation; and they are costly to disassemble and recycle. Electronics also contain valuable resources that can and should be reused or recycled, and significant green house gas reductions can be attained by their reuse and recycling.

Under a system without product stewardship, local governments are often held responsible for financing the management of this equipment at the end of life, regardless of the product's toxicity or recyclability. Product Stewardship systems move the responsibility for financing the end of life management of these products to the product manufacturers. Product stewardship systems can result in more extensive and convenient collection opportunities, increase recycling rates, attain economies of scale, and ultimately provide a feedback loop that can drive design decisions when combined with other complimentary policies and approaches.

The NWPSC was involved in the creation of product stewardship legislation in Washington and Oregon that established systems whereby product manufacturers are responsible for the creation and financing of a convenient, environmentally safe collection and recycling system for electronic products. In 2006 the Washington State Legislature passed the Electronic Product Recycling Law 70.95N RCW. The program went into effect in January 2009 and requires that computer and television manufacturers provide consumers, small business, schools and small local governments with convenient recycling for their computers, televisions, and monitors at no cost. The program, called E-Cycle Washington, is described in more detail on the web site at <http://www.ecyclewashington.org>.

In June, 2007, the Oregon State Legislature passed [HB 2626](#) which creates a producer responsibility system for the management of computers, monitors and televisions. The program, called Oregon E-Cycles began in January 2009 and provides convenient recycling of covered devices in all parts of the state. The system allows households, businesses and small non-profits to drop off seven or fewer covered devices at a time at no cost. All manufacturers of covered electronic devices are required to provide collection and recycling for these products or pay for a program contracted by the state. Manufacturers are required to register with the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and pay an annual registration fee. Manufacturers must indicate their intent to participate in a "manufacturer program" or the "contractor program". More information can be found on the web site at <http://www.deq.state.or.us/lq/ecycle/>.

As of January 1, 2010, Oregon has banned the disposal of computers, monitors and TVs in the garbage or at disposal sites such as landfills, transfer stations and incinerators. Some local governments in Washington have also banned certain electronic products that contain toxic materials from their landfills and disposal sites.

The decision to limit the types of electronic products covered under the recycling laws was a practical strategic and political decision that was intended to limit the number of number of manufacturers that would be effected by, and likely opposed to the legislation. Laws in other areas such as the European Union's Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) Directive, cover all electrical and electronic products with a plug, battery or solar cell. Programs in Canada are rapidly moving to include a similar scope of products as the WEEE directive.

Because the legislated programs in WA and OR cover a limited scope of products, most electronic products outside that scope continue to be disposed as garbage or are stored, thus wasting the environmental and economic opportunities that could be attained through reuse, recycling and product redesign. In some communities, local governments have assisted with the development of a private sector infrastructure to recycle the types of electronic products not covered by the electronics recycling laws.

Other activities related to electronic products that are complimentary to these product stewardship laws and programs include the establishment of energy conservation and usage requirement on equipment, such as televisions, and the development of environmental standards and certification programs, such as the Electronic Product Environmental Assessment Tool (EPEAT). Also of importance are the issues related to the export of electronic products for reuse and recycling and the certification of recyclers to ensure that the electronic products are being handled in a manner that protects human health and the environment.

### **The NWPSC Position**

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The current electronic product recycling laws cover only a limited type of products: computers, monitors and televisions. The NWPSC electronics subcommittee believes that in order for electronic product recycling to be successful over the long term, the scope of products covered under the electronic product stewardship laws should be expanded to cover all electronics and electronic equipment.

The subcommittee believes that additional actions are needed to fully address the environmental impact of electronic products, such as energy conservation standards, chemical/material disclosure, product certification standards such as those being developed through the EPEAT process, policies and laws regarding the export of electronic equipment for reuse and recycling and certification programs for electronic product collectors, recyclers and processors.

### **Proposed Solution/Recommendations**

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The NWPSC Electronics Subcommittee will monitor, evaluate, and provide feedback on the E-Cycle programs in Oregon and Washington. In addition, the NWPSC can provide support for education and outreach efforts about the new system.

Since the current laws only cover a limited number of electronic products, the NWPSC will explore ways to include additional electronic products in product stewardship programs.

The subcommittee, through its members and as able, will provide support for complimentary activities and policies, such as development of energy conservation, product certification standards, policies on exporting products for reuse and recycling and recycler certification programs.

### **Subcommittee Next Steps/Timeline**

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Next steps for the subcommittee are as follows:

### **For the State of Washington**

- Monitor the E-Cycle program implementation process and provide comment and/or feedback on any independent plan submissions, satisfaction reports, and at other opportunities as requested.
- Participate in the E-Cycle Washington public outreach committee convened by Department of Ecology.
- Develop a strategy and timeline, including stakeholder involvement, for expanding the scope of products covered by the electronic product recycling legislation.

### Washington Timeline

Throughout 2010:

- Participate in IEEE/EPEAT Standards development process for television and imaging devices.
- Develop strategic plan with timeline for expanding scope of products covered under existing legislation
- Begin compilation of issues that might need to be addressed (if any) in future revisions of legislation.

### **For the State of Oregon**

- Monitor Oregon's E-cycle program and provide feedback or comments as appropriate.
- Follow the DEQ's process regarding proposed changes to e-waste law including changes to the manufacturers' registration fees.

### Oregon Timeline

- Summer-Fall 2010: Development of e-waste legislative concepts by DEQ for the 2011 State legislative session.

### **For the NW region and other states:**

- Continue to share information between Oregon and Washington on efforts to implement the electronic product recycling laws.
- Continue to assess the electronics product stewardship program for lessons learned that can be applied to other product areas and future legislation.
- Create and distribute a report entitled "Preliminary Analysis of E-Cycle Programs in Washington and Oregon" which explores the preliminary results of the programs. (Completed March 2010)
- Support producer-responsibility solutions to electronics throughout the nation. Track policy developments in other states and at the federal level.
- Participate in IEEE/EPEAT Standards development process for television and imaging devices.
- Support and expand interim recycling solutions, such as the Take it Back Network.
- Continue to support and help develop rigorous export policies and recycler certification programs that result in global environmental protection.