

# Northwest Product Stewardship Council

## Steering Committee

Members of the Steering Committee are representatives of government agencies that provide funding and/or staff time to NWPSC product stewardship activities and projects.

### The Steering Committee of the Northwest Product Stewardship Council:

- Coordinates and supports Council projects
- Organizes regular membership meetings
- Communicates regularly with the membership
- Approves activities and projects done in the name of the NWPSC
- Supports educational events
- Participates in NWPSC projects

### Steering Committee Members as of January 1, 2005

- City of Tacoma, Washington
- King County, Department of Natural Resources and Parks, Washington
- Kitsap County, Washington
- Local Hazardous Waste Management Program in King County, Washington
- Metro Waste Reduction, Planning and Outreach Division, Oregon
- Seattle Public Utilities, Washington
- Snohomish County Public Works Solid Waste Management Division, Washington
- Thurston County Department of Water and Waste Management
- Thurston County Public Health and Social Services
- United States Environmental Protection Agency, Region X
- Washington State Department of Ecology

## Council Membership

Membership is open to individuals and organizations that wish to learn more about using product stewardship as a policy tool to save resources, reduce waste management costs to governments and their ratepayers and to reduce the use of toxic materials in products.

### Product Subcommittees

- Electronic Products
- Paint
- Mercury-containing Products
- Beverage Containers
- Pharmaceuticals

## Learn More About the Northwest Product Stewardship Council

To join the NWPSC or to learn more about the Council, contact the NWPSC Coordinator.

**By phone at:**  
(206) 723-0528

**By email at:**  
info@productstewardship.net

**Visit the website at:**  
www.productstewardship.net



The Northwest Product Stewardship Council is a group of government organizations that works with businesses and nonprofit groups to integrate product stewardship principles into the policy and economic structures of the Pacific Northwest.



## What is Product Stewardship?

*Product Stewardship is an environmental management strategy that means whoever designs, produces, sells, or uses a product takes responsibility for minimizing the product's environmental impact throughout all stages of the products' life cycle. The greatest responsibility lies with whomever has the most ability to affect the life cycle environmental impacts of the products.*

## Why Product Stewardship?

It is in the best interest of states, local governments, industries, environmental groups, and consumers to reduce the adverse environmental and health impacts of consumer products.

To achieve this result, product stewardship policies encourage manufacturers and others with influence over the life cycle of a product to take responsibility for reducing the environmental impacts of that product. Product designers and manufacturers can reduce energy and materials consumption, they can reduce the amount of toxic materials used to create the product, and design products that result in minimal waste at the end of the product's life.

There are four primary reasons for instituting product stewardship policies:

- Conserving resources
- Reducing waste
- Reducing the costs to government and ratepayers to manage the waste products
- Reducing potential harm from exposure to toxic materials

### Product Stewardship Examples

Taking responsibility for reducing the environmental impacts of a product can take many forms:

#### Product Takeback

Manufacturers and retailers can take back used products from their customers and refurbish or recycle the products. By taking responsibility for the used products, manufacturers have an incentive to design products that can be reused or recycled for a minimal cost.

#### Environmentally Friendly Design

Products can be designed so that they contain minimal amounts of toxic materials and are more recyclable. This is a benefit to customers who buy

and use the products, the workers manufacturing the products, and the recyclers that take apart and reprocess the materials. It is also a benefit to the environment because the toxic materials are never released into the air and water.

#### Offer the Product as a Service

In some cases, consumers are not interested in owning a product, but are actually interested in receiving the service the product delivers. For example, some businesses may not desire to own their own copy machine, but rather they want the service provided by the copier. Offering the product as part of a service, providing maintenance and taking it back at the end of the lease can provide manufacturers with incentives to design durable, upgradeable products.

### Is Anyone Adopting Product Stewardship Policies?

Many countries are using product stewardship policies to encourage environmentally friendly product design and to shift the costs of managing products at end-of-life from government to manufacturers and producers.

In the United States, the Rechargeable Battery Recycling Corporation (RBRC) was formed and funded by manufacturers in the rechargeable power industry to collect and recycle rechargeable batteries from consumers.

The European governments and European Parliament adopted legislation in November, 2002, that makes individual manufacturers responsible for the financing and takeback of their brand electronic products for recycling.

Sweden, Norway and Japan have enacted manufacturer responsibility laws for electronic products that require manufacturers to be responsible for products at the end-of-life.