



Involving people in creating a sustainable future through local efforts to reduce, reuse, and recycle

EPEAT: Electronics Are Becoming Greener

By Wayne Rifer

One of the goals of Recycling Advocates has been to influence the electronics industry to make their products – computers, televisions and so on – more recyclable and to be free of toxic materials. This was a major objective of the Western Electronic Product Stewardship Initiative (WEPSI) project that Recycling Advocates conducted in 2001 and 2002.

Significant progress has been made!

Out of WEPSI a new project called the Electronic Product Environmental Assessment Tool (EPEAT) was initiated in 2003. The effort was led by a Portland non-profit called Zero Waste Alliance under an EPA grant. After three years of working with stakeholders from industry, government, environmental organizations, recyclers and others, a new system that will incentivize manufacturers to design green computers has emerged.

EPEAT is designed for institutional purchasers to identify and select electronic products that meet strict environmental criteria. The system will be available on a website at www.epeat.net.

The Green Electronics Council (GEC), a Portland-based organization, is implementing the web-based system for manufacturers to earn recognition for environmentally friendly computers. Due to strong stakeholder support, the federal government has tied over \$20 billion of purchasing to EPEAT. Manufacturers are taking notice. Intel, Dell, HP and others are redesigning

their equipment so that they can meet the EPEAT standard when it goes on line in July.

Using the power of the marketplace, EPEAT will drive improvement in the following areas:

- Reduction/Elimination of Environmentally Sensitive Materials
- Materials Selection, e.g. recycled content
- Design for Recycling and Reuse
- Life Cycle Extension
- Energy Conservation
- Take-Back at End of Life
- Corporate Performance
- Packaging

But EPEAT isn't the end of the story. In July a new European law goes into effect such that no electronic products can use lead in their solder, or contain several other toxic substances. This law has dramatically changed the manufacturing of electronics worldwide. And such laws are emerging in other countries, including the country of California.

Some manufacturers have been designing environmentally improved computers for some time. These initiatives will create an industry floor that is environmentally preferable. And, under EPEAT, the best companies will be able to excel by achieving higher levels of performance, called EPEAT Bronze, Silver and Gold.

So next time you need to buy a computer, go to www.epeat.net and find the models that are most environmentally responsible. And EPEAT intends in time to extend this standard to cell

phones, printers, televisions and lots of other electronics.



GREEN ELECTRONICS COUNCIL

Recycling Advocates Family Reunion

That is what it felt like when we got together with some past board members last month. The current RA Board invited former board members and the organization's founder to get together to talk about old times and new endeavors over a couple of beers at the Rose & Raindrop. Since the organization is 19 years old, we had some catching up to do.

Jeanne Roy and her husband are in the process of writing a book. Mary Blankevoort is still working with the Multnomah County Fair. Michal Angus is spending lots of volunteer hours at Free Geek, building computers and helping others. And Theresa Smith is the strong grassroots activist she always was. Nice to see all of these people.

Each one of these former board members brought a passion to Recycling Advocates. Meeting with them again energized the current board and fueled our pursuits of the mission of the organization.

- Betty Patton



Theresa Smith, Rob Guttridge, Rhett Lawrence, Mary Blankevoort, and Rick Paul enjoying the camaraderie at the RA Board Alumni gathering.

**Recycling Advocates is
a proud member of**



From the President with Betty Patton



Dear Members,

Now is the time when a lot of folks are looking for the good stuff to read during the summer. Here are a few new books that I have come across recently.

High Tech Trash just came out last month. It is a thoroughly researched and engaging book by local writer Elizabeth Grossman. Lizzie has immersed herself in the electronics waste and recycling issues for years and her book reflects an international knowledge. A topic like this could be very dry reading, but not with Lizzie's touch. She gives us a view of the manufacturing process as well as an insight into our voracious appetite for everything electronic. And she leaves us with hope. "I believe that the more we know about the environmental and health problems caused by high-tech trash and high-tech manufacturing, and the wider this knowledge is spread, the more quickly these problems may be solved."

The Omnivore's Dilemma by Michael Pollan identifies the three food chains that sustain contemporary Americans. The organic and the hunter-gatherer have been around for a long time. The third one is new; the industrial food chain. Sounds kind of odd to some of us, the words "industrial" and "food" put together. However, the bulk of Americans' diet comes from this food chain. We can choose from processed food, from organic food, or from food we have grown or hunted ourselves. This book demonstrates that we are what we eat.

My third recommendation is Al Gore's An Inconvenient Truth; The Planetary Emergency of Global Warming and What We Can Do About It. I saw Vice-President Gore's presentation on this topic when he came to Portland a few months ago. I was fascinated. Most of you know that he has studied this issue for decades and has a scientific understanding of the topic. And yes, it is coming to a theater near you!

I don't have any fiction to recommend, but these three books will inform you and energize you in all of your environmental endeavors.

Happy reading,

- Betty

Apple Computer Offers Take-Back Program

After Pressure From Environmental Groups, Apple Computer Offers Take-Back Program.

After pressure from environmental groups in advance of Apple Computer's annual meeting, the company said April 21 that it will offer a free program to take back and recycle old computers from consumers who buy new Apple computers.

Computer TakeBack Campaign, a national coalition of groups promoting electronic waste recycling, applauded the company's action, noting that the campaign had been calling on Apple to join Dell and HP in providing free computer recycling to customers for more than a year.

However, unlike Dell and HP, Apple has not announced any collection goals for the program, which will operate through its retail stores and website, Computer TakeBack officials said.

Apple has had a computer recycling program since 2001, but currently charges a fee of \$30 to accept a computer, a company spokeswoman said April 24. Materials are recycled domestically and no hazardous material is shipped overseas, the company said.

Computer TakeBack estimates that up to 80 percent of the hazardous electronic waste collected nationally for recycling is shipped overseas to developing countries, most of which lack adequate infrastructure to process it safely.

Upcoming Shareholder Proposal

Apple's announcement came less than a week before the company's April 27 annual meeting, where shareholders will be voting on a resolution that would require Apple to study ways to improve its recycling program, according to Computer TakeBack. The resolution was filed last year by As You Sow, a San Francisco-based socially responsible investment firm that acts on behalf of shareholders.

Apple's announcement that it will take back computers was welcomed by the investment firm.

"It's a significant step forward," Conrad MacKerron, director of As You Sow's corporate social responsibility program, said April 24. The initiative puts Apple on par with the standard take-back programs of HP and Dell, he said.

However, As You Sow would like to see the company supplement the in-house recycling effort with national programs aimed at getting older machines into a safe waste stream, as HP and Dell have done, he said.

A statement from Apple's board of directors opposing the As You Sow shareholder proposal argues that the company's environmental policy "goes well beyond the shareholder proposal's very narrow view of environmental stewardship."

The statement argues that the company "makes it a priority to minimize the product's environmental impact long before it is discarded." The company's products are designed with recycling in mind and Apple "led the industry" in moving away from the use of lead-filled CRT displays for personal computers, the statement said.

Apple offers free recycling of its iPods and has set up a trade-in program for computers from educational and business users, the statement said.

At Apple's annual meeting in 2005, Computer TakeBack and the Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition released an alternative version of Apple's annual report, highlighting electronic waste issues at a rally outside the company's Cupertino, Calif., headquarters.

Contention Over State Legislation

While supportive of the free recycling program being launched by Apple, the Computer TakeBack Campaign is also asking that the company stop lobbying against pending state legislative efforts to establish electronics takeback and recycling programs.

Apple lobbied against the most recent electronic waste recycling effort in Washington state, according to the campaign.

On March 24, Washington Governor Christine Gregoire (D) signed legislation (S.B. 6428) that requires electronics manufacturers to pay for the collection, transportation, and recycling of computers, monitors, and television sets from consumers, small business, schools, small governments, and charities. Under the law, manufacturers must establish plans by 2009 to collect, transport, and recycle electronic products, including most computers, monitors, and television sets.

Gregoire vetoed a section of the bill prohibiting the export of electronic waste to specific countries. In her veto message, Gregoire said the state does not have the authority to impose such a ban, although she said it is "good environmental policy" (59 DEN A-9, 03/28/06).

- Joyce Hedges



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Recycling Advocacy Calendar for June 2006

◆ **Household Hazardous Waste Collection, Bend**

Saturday, June 17

Household Hazardous Waste Collection

One-day collection event in Bend at the county Public Works. Department on SE 7th. More info at 541-317-3163.

◆ **28th Annual Association of Oregon Recyclers Conference**

Thursday—Saturday, June 22—24

AOR's 28th Annual Conference, Trade Show and Education conference. At Valley River Inn in Eugene. Education conference. \$40 - \$95, Annual conference \$235 - \$275. Discount of \$10 for both conference. Details at www.aORr.org or from Patty Morgan (503-233-8633).

◆ **Measuring What Matters**

Wednesday, June 14

Annual day-long intermediate-level workshop in Portland on tools for assessing progress toward sustainability—how to select goals and metrics, analyze performance indicators, use

metrics to drive breakthroughs, and reward people. Sponsored by the Oregon Natural Step Network. \$245 - \$290. Register at www.ortns.org or 502-241-1140.

◆ **Recycling Advocates June board meeting**

Monday, June 26, 7:30 p.m.

For location and information call 503-777-0909



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