



# RECYCLING ADVOCATES

April 2003

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

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## **Toward the Road to Recovery**

*Metro shepherds effort to reduce contamination of recyclables*

In late January, a subcommittee of Metro's Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC) developed recommendations addressing what Metro, local governments, and various stakeholders should do to improve the recovery of recyclable materials at each stage of their collection and processing. The recommendations included actions to implement "best practices," sampling and reporting of residuals, and improving public education.

### *Some Background*

The results of Metro's "Commingled Commercial Recyclables Processing Study" from October 2002 caused enough concern about the problem of lost recyclables that Metro convened a SWAC Subcommittee on the Contamination & Loss of Recyclables. Two RA board members, Rob Guttridge and Tanya Schaefer, were members of the multi-stakeholder group.

The Metro study identified a residual rate of 5%, an undesirable amount that was higher than expected and found to be caused by higher rates of commingling since the last study of this nature. Residual refers to the amount of recyclable materials lost in the recovery process due to contamination. Consumers, haulers, and processors typically contaminate recyclable materials by mixing glass, metal, plastics, or non-recyclables with paper at the point of collection or during the processing of the materials to be sent out to market. The largest cause of residuals by far is the mixing of glass with fibers (paper and cardboard). Loads of contaminated fiber sometimes make their way through

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## **Metro's Buyer's Guide to Recycled Products**

*A tool for business seeking to buy green*

Metro has released its online Buyer's Guide to Recycled Products aimed at helping businesses find vendors that sell recycled-content products. The online guide is available at [www.metro-region.org/buyersguide](http://www.metro-region.org/buyersguide).

The Buyer's Guide to Recycled Products gives businesses access to more than 1000 recycled products, as well as retailers, manufacturers, and distributors who produce the products or sell the products.

Recycled-content products are manufactured with waste material that has been recovered or diverted from solid waste. Purchasing recycled products is an ongoing commitment for some businesses and a new step for others.

Businesses can use this guide to search for recycled-content products that are available retail and/or wholesale, at stores, by catalog and online. The search tool enables users to search using keywords, brand names and vendor names. The guide details recycled product information including brand name, company contact information and percentage of recycled content and percentage of post-consumer recycled content. The information in the guide also specifies retail locations, providing maps and the distance from your address.

A broad range of products is available under such categories as Office Products, Building Supplies, Storage and Shipping Supplies, and Janitorial Supplies. Some products include:

- For maintenance and construction — ceiling tiles, asphalt, concrete, building insulation, flooring, carpet, tiles, mats, dock bumpers, plastic

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## **E-Waste Legislation Update**

*Now is the time to lobby state senators to support SB867*

As previously reported, Recycling Advocates is sponsoring an e-waste bill this session in the legislature. SB867 has been introduced and can be found on the web at [http://pub.das.state.or.us/LEG\\_BILLS/PDFs/SB867.pdf](http://pub.das.state.or.us/LEG_BILLS/PDFs/SB867.pdf). It will probably be heard in the Senate's General Government Committee in the first week of April, with a subsequent referral to Ways and Means. Members of General Government Committee include Tony Corcoran of Corvallis, John Minnis of Gresham, Bruce Starr of Washington County and Vickie Walker of Eugene.

If you would like to help with this effort by providing testimony, please contact us. Also, RA has posted a fact sheet for citizen letters and calls to senators at [www.recyclingadvocates.org](http://www.recyclingadvocates.org). Contacting any of the four mentioned senators would be especially helpful if you are one of their constituents.

## **Bottle Bill and State Revenues**

*Oregonian editorial supports expanding bottle bill*

As Oregon and other states battle soaring budget deficits, editors at *The Oregonian* urged lawmakers to take a new look at expanding the state's bottle bill. First they note that the deposit fee has not kept up with inflation since its introduction in 1971. A nickel in 1971 would be worth 23 cents today. *The Oregonian* then suggested that the legislature at least double the deposit fee. A higher deposit fee would also create a greater incentive to return bottles.

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the recovery process to paper mills where the unusable materials are rejected and sent out for disposal in landfills.

The problem of residual, or contaminated recyclable materials, is fraught with complications. First, the stakeholders are varied. Haulers and their customers (industry and consumers), material recovery facilities (MRFs) and other processors, local governments, and Metro each bring their interests to the table.

Second, haulers are in competition with each other, MRFs compete for business from independent haulers, and some paper mills run their own MRFs to compete better with other mills.

Third, Metro has no statutory authority to enforce any rate of cleanliness on haulers, MRFs or mills. According to Rob Guttridge, RA's board president, Metro took on the daunting task of bringing multiple and competing stakeholders together to attack a problem for which the regional government cannot mandate a solution. Overall, Guttridge is pleased with the recommendations of the SWAC's subcommittee.

#### The recommendations in detail

##### Best Practices

The subcommittee recommended that:

1. Local governments should formalize their agreement that *glass never be mixed with fiber at any point during collection or processing*. Metro should help local jurisdictions educate the public to ensure this outcome.

2. Haulers and local governments should educate customers with roll-cart recycling service about ways to reduce contamination.
3. With the increase in paper shredding as a counter measure to identity theft, there should be monitoring of shredded paper losses at MRFs, along with research into ways of preventing these losses.

##### Sampling and Reporting

Sampling and reporting both created tensions among MRF representatives in the subcommittee due to their competitive nature and a concern about possible future regulation. In response, the subcommittee recommended that Metro's involvement with MRF processing outcomes at this time be one of cooperative partnering and research, not of regulation. MRFs will report their residual percentages to Metro each month, as they do to DEQ, and will provide an annual average percentage rate based on their records of tons received, marketed and disposed. Metro will review these records at the MRFs to confirm the residual percentage reports. To maintain confidentiality, Metro will neither take nor retain specific information from MRFs' records.

The group also recommended that Metro sample MRF disposed residuals and commodities intended for market twice each year to establish levels of garbage and misplaced recyclables. In addition to sampling, Metro can observe, but will not sample, loads delivered to MRFs and MRF handling practices.

The subcommittee elected to not establish a contamination or residual target rate at this time. Over the next year, Metro will compare the results of its samples and MRF reports against the 5% total contamination found in the 2002 study (the sum of 1% disposed residue at the MRFs and 4% found in paper commodities sent to markets). RA's Guttridge and Schaefer noted that they were satisfied with this recommendation, since Metro could not have enforced compliance with a strict target rate. Guttridge pointed out that a loose, easily met target could also be a disincentive to processors who already maintain a residual rate below any

specific mandated percentage.

##### Follow-up Actions

The subcommittee will reconvene in a year or so to review sampling and reporting procedures and data, and to decide what should be done to follow up on the new information. The group recommended that Metro work with MRFs to identify opportunities to improve processing outcomes, based on the extent of contamination found through sampling and MRF reports over the next year. A final recommendation directs Metro to work with local governments to improve public education aimed at reducing contamination.

##### Next steps

The full Solid Waste Advisory Committee approved the subcommittee recommendations at its meeting on February 24. Metro will begin the reporting and sampling process. According to Lee Barrett of Metro, the facilities will begin reporting to Metro in the next couple of months. On-site visits will likely begin sometime after the start of Metro's next fiscal year in July. The local governments are currently responsible for adjusting permits and franchise agreements with haulers to explicitly state that glass will not be mixed with fiber. Also, Metro has already sent out a request for proposals to develop an educational campaign targeting businesses. "This is an example of how everyone is willing to come to the table and make decisions in a regional agreement on how to go forward," added Barrett.

We will keep readers informed on the impact of the recommendations on the local residual rates, as results become available.

## RECYCLING ADVOCATES

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## Mark Your Calendars!

Association of Oregon Recyclers'  
17th Annual Education  
Conference

Dates: June 19, 2003

Eugene, Valley River Inn

Association of Oregon Recyclers'  
25th Annual Recycling  
Conference & Trade Show

Dates: June 20-21, 2003

Eugene, Valley River Inn

Visit [www.aorr.org](http://www.aorr.org) for more  
information.

**Buyer's Guide, continued**

lumber, decks, fences, and play-ground surfacing.

- For service centers and institutions — cleaning supplies, trash bags, food service products, tissue products, and recycling containers.
- For offices — binders, business cards, computer paper, copy paper, pens, pencils, toner cartridges, envelopes, calendars, padded mailers, labels, mailing tubes, and packaging.

Buying recycled creates and expands markets for the materials collected for recycling. As the demand goes up, the variety of and quality of available recycled-content products go up and prices come down. Buying recycled-content products ensures that the materials collected in your recycling programs will be used again in the manufacture of new products. Until recovered materials are made into new recycled-content products, they are not really recycled.

Businesses that sell recycled-content products can be listed in the guide at no cost. For more information, contact Marta McGuire at (503) 797-1806 or e-mail mcguirem@metro.dst.or.us.

Source: *Metro Solid Waste and Recycling Department*

**Bon Voyage, Kate!**

*Kate Wells steps down from RA board*

The Recycling Advocates Board of Directors wishes to extend a huge THANK YOU to Kate Wells for all that she has given to our organization over the past four years. Kate began working as RA's first paid contractor in April, 1999, editing the newsletter, coordinating membership and generally keeping our house in order. Dedicated to RA's mission, Kate then was elected to the Board of Directors in July of 2000, and served as Treasurer until February of this year. Kate (and her sharp wit) will be missed, and we wish her the best in her new career.

*Note: Tanya Schaefer, an at-large Board member since September 2002, has assumed the office of Treasurer until July's Board election.*

**Bottle Bill, continued**

Under the current law unclaimed deposits go to the beverage distributor who initiated the deposit. The editors at *The Oregonian* urge the state to change the statute so that all unclaimed deposits revert to the state. The editors note that Michigan collected \$23.5 million in 2000, and Massachusetts collected \$35 million in 2002.

According to the Department of Environmental Quality an estimated 205 to 250 million deposit beverage containers, with deposits worth \$10.3-12.5 million, are discarded in Oregon's landfills each year. "This is roughly 16 percent of the containers sold with deposits in Oregon. Also, an unknown number of containers are recycled through curbside and other recycling programs without being redeemed for their nickel deposit," states the DEQ web site. Clearly, a revised Oregon bottle bill could support state government programs for all Oregonians.

Look for our article on how other states are expanding their bottle bills in the May issue of the RA Newsletter. For more information on the Oregon statute and unredeemed deposits, visit the DEQ web site at [www.deq.state.or.us/wmc/solwaste/bottlebill.html](http://www.deq.state.or.us/wmc/solwaste/bottlebill.html) and [www.deq.state.or.us/wmc/solwaste/unredmupdate2003.html](http://www.deq.state.or.us/wmc/solwaste/unredmupdate2003.html). *The Oregonian's* editorial appeared on March 3, 2003.

**RA on Advisory Committee in Gresham**

Tanya Schaefer, RA Treasurer, recently was appointed to a three-year term on the City of Gresham's Environmental Services Council Advisory Committee (ESCAC) as the environmental non-profit representative. The ESCAC advises the Gresham City Council on planning, organizing and evaluating local and regional stormwater, wastewater, water, recycling and solid waste services, programs, and policy needs.

The committee is made up of representatives from the community including five citizens at large, one significant industrial user, one local non-profit affiliate, one development community representative, one Chamber of Commerce representative, one solid waste hauler representative and one representative from the City of Wood Village. Councilor Dave Shields serves as the Council liaison to the committee and Tam Driscoll serves as the City's staff liaison.

Schaefer encourages members who live or work in Gresham to contact her with relevant issues or concerns to bring to the ESCAC. Contact her at 503-777-0909 or [tk@hevanet.com](mailto:tk@hevanet.com).



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OF OREGON



**RECYCLING ADVOCATES**  
**Membership Application**

\$25 Regular    \$10-24 Living Lightly    \$50 Sustainer    \$\_\_\_\_\_ Other

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*Sign me up for Action Alerts*    *Contact me about volunteering for RA*

Please enclose a check and mail to: PO Box 6736, Portland, OR 97228-6736

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Phone Day \_\_\_\_\_ Evening \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_  Send my newsletter by e-mail

\*Your name, if this is a gift membership: \_\_\_\_\_

*Your membership contribution to RA is tax-deductible to the full extent of the law.*

**Celebrate Earth Day with RA Gift Memberships!**

**Upcoming Events and Workshops**

**ILLAHEE Environment Matters Evening Lecture Series**

*The 1,200 Mile Congo Trek*

Presenter: Dr. Michael Fay. Dr. Fay describes his adventures in the African Congo and his crusade to create what is now the world's largest park system.

Date: April 4, 2003

Time: 7:30 p.m.

Location: Portland, First Congregational Church, 1126 SW Park

For more details e-mail [ned@illahee.org](mailto:ned@illahee.org) or call (503) 222-2719. Admission charged.

**The Healthy Environment Forum**

*Who Decides What Is "Safe"?*

Presenter: Dr. Philip Landrigan, MD, MPH, Chair of the Department of Community and Preventative Medicine, and Director of the Center for Children's Health and the Environment at Mount Sinai School of Medicine, will explain how regulators determine what is safe and what the implications are for

policy and clinical practice.

Date: April 8, 2003

Time: 6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

Location: Portland, Multnomah Athletic Club, 1849 SW Salmon

For more details go to [www.orcouncil.org](http://www.orcouncil.org) or call (503) 222-1963. Admission charged.

**Forum for Business and the Environment**

*Low-Impact Development: How Re-Designing Commercial Buildings, Industrial Buildings, and Urban Landscapes Can Help Keep Our Rivers Clean*

Presenters: Jim Woodworth, Ed McNamara, Tom Liptan.

Dates: April 10, 2003

Time: 7:00 a.m. - 9:00 a.m.

Location: Portland, Multnomah Athletic Club, 1849 SW Salmon

For more details go to [www.orcouncil.org](http://www.orcouncil.org) or call (503) 222-1963. Admission charged.

*Note: The same presentation will be held in Eugene on April 11 at 7:00 am at the University of Oregon School of*

*Architecture, Lawrence Hall, Room 206.*

**Recycling Advocates Board Meeting**

Date: April TBA

Time: 7:30 p.m.

For location and information, call 503-777-0909.

**Oregon Natural Step Network**

*Sustainable Purchasing Strategies Using the Natural Step Framework*

In this one-day workshop, buyers will learn how to move beyond the familiar purchasing decision-making model of price, quality and delivery and begin to develop a buying process and vendor selection criteria that are aligned with sustainability and The Natural Step (TNS) principles.

Workshop leaders: Scot Case and Joshua Proudfoot

Dates: April 29 and 30, 2003

Locations: Portland and Corvallis

For more details and registration visit [www.ortns.org](http://www.ortns.org) or call (503) 241-7429.

Admission charged.

*Copied on 100% post-consumer content recycled paper.*

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