

## **Recycling System Subgroup Conference Call Meeting 3 Summary October 30, 2001**

### **Members in Attendance**

Kent Dunn, Quantum Resource  
Recovery  
Sego Jackson, Snohomish County  
Chipper Hervieux, WA DOE  
Oso, Free Geek  
Lauren Roman, United Industrial  
Recycling

Scott Klag, Metro  
Greg Sampson, StRUT  
Dick Schmidt, City of Portland  
Heather Bowman, EIA  
Betty Patton, Environmental Practices  
(WEPSI staff)

**Summary of previous meeting** The summary of the October 16<sup>th</sup> meeting was distributed via the listserv and posted on the WEPSI website. Some changes and some discussion topics were submitted by the participants in this meeting as well as via the listserv.

The use of the phrase *planned obsolescence* was discussed in detail. Obsolescence is not planned, according to some of the participants. This is something that happens as a result of the speed of development of the technology. Others took exception to this due to the lack of repair opportunities for many products. Some products are built with little or no dismantling capabilities and no replacement parts.

The phrase *labor intensive dismantling* sparked a lot of conversation. It is true that some methods of recycling, grinding for example, do not require dismantling. However, this eliminates the opportunity for reuse. Manually disassembling equipment to separate metal and plastic for recycling takes a minimum of 15 minutes per system. The markets for separated metal, some plastics, and CRT glass cullet are fairly decent. However, getting the material to that level of separation and preparation and transporting them to market adds considerably to their cost.

Tracking Asian markets was discussed as being particularly challenging. The materials shipped to those markets have a product value. They are not a waste product. But there is a desire to know the material handling practices of the product and the amount of residual. Is manual dismantling practiced? Environmental regulations of each country are posted on various websites. But some members of this group questioned the extent and enforcement of these rules. In many cases, shipping electronic scrap to Asia is returning the material to the point of origin. This might be an advantage in a product stewardship project.

The Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition is beginning to research the material flow of electronic scrap to and within Asia. Their desire is to document accurate diversion rates. They are interviewing material handlers about the effects on the environment. There are other research attempts going on across the nation.

Material handling practices, both local and abroad, is desired information for recycling companies. Classification of material, either scrap or commodity, is in question.

**Review of the subgroup's timeline** A status presentation is scheduled for the full multi-stakeholder meeting on December 12<sup>th</sup> in Portland. The subgroup has 2 scheduled conference call meetings between now and that date. We need to have a speaker at that meeting, also.

**Prioritize Topics** This subgroup discussed in detail the following topics and listed them in order of priority:

- CRT's and TV's
- Software licensing for the reuse market
- Foreign markets
- Disposable products
- Plastic resins

The group will study the location and types of markets for CRT's and TV's and the reuse demand for these products. The group discussed the changing technology and the growth of flat panel screens. There are a variety of types of flat panels, but none of them have replaced tube technology yet. Due to the expected lifespan of a tube monitor of about eight years, these type of products will be in use for many years and in our waste stream for many years after that. Therefore, creating a market infrastructure for this product line is a wise idea.

The members of the group that are interested and involved in reuse of electronic equipment are interested in pursuing the opportunities for open source software and the barriers found in this. Congress is considering regulations for any hardware containing embedded software. Several people interested and involved in open source software are tracking this due to the potential negative impact to an OSS operating system. Approximately 23% of PC's are shipped with Linux, an open source operating system. Many more Linux-based systems are in use in schools and non-profits. The percentage of the total market that runs Linux is estimable but not trackable.

It is important for this group and for the electronic scrap recycling industry as a whole to gather information on foreign markets. The participants in this group are aware of barriers to this pursuit, but will contribute any verifiable information. Other groups are looking into this task and we will try to coordinate efforts and combine information. It is our goal to gather information and avoid a prejudiced notion of all foreign markets are bad and all local markets are good.

Disposable products as a focus for our group was designated as lower priority. Many products in this category are lower cost peripherals with a moderately long repair window. When these products are in need of repair, the capabilities and technology has substantially increased and their price has usually decreased. This combination quite often creates single use items. Consumers have shown by their purchasing habits that they are not willing to spend money on some categories of equipment. They choose to spend less and upgrade more frequently. If WEPSI chose to educate the consumer on proper purchasing decisions to minimize waste, the group would first need to determine who the consumer trusts for information of this sort and what format of information is most effective.

The problem of using multiple plastic resins and the difficulty of separation was discussed as a larger corporate, national, or even international problem. The American Plastics Council is looking into the possibility of limiting the number of resins in the manufacture of electronic products. This problem is perceived by the group as a low priority because of the lack of regional influence. We will try to stay informed of the worldwide activities that address this problem.

### **Research/Tasks**

We will begin to create reports on the status of CRT and television reuse and recycling within our four-state region. We will also explore hardware reuse opportunities and the barriers to reuse. Both of these topics will be addressed to create an ideal product stewardship based system. This

system will then be analyzed by listing the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. We will present a status report at our meeting in Portland on December 12<sup>th</sup>.

Betty will distribute the report on glass to glass recycling and Heather will distribute the NERC report on the current status of e-scrap recycling via the listserv.

The subgroup members will send information to Betty on CRT and television recycling in the region and on foreign markets. Oso of Free Geek will work with Greg Sampson of StRUT and will be our coordinators for the reuse market and software licensing opportunities and barriers.

### **Group Process**

Future meetings: 11/13 (206-553-4602) and 12/4 (206-553-4557), all beginning at 3:00 pm Pacific Time.