

Plastic Bottles Recycling Workgroup - Conference Call 8/21/13

Project background: Several workgroups have been formed in response to Wisconsin's Plastics Recycling Study which was prepared for the Wisconsin DNR. Each workgroup is made up of members from the Governor's Council on Recycling, the DNR, local governments, and industry, with the goal of increasing recycling rates of plastics throughout the state. The Plastic Bottles Recycling Workgroup is tasked with proposing specific actions to increase the recycling of PET and HDPE bottles and will focus on increasing away-from-home recycling of plastic bottles.

Meeting Summary: A diverse group of stakeholders met via conference call to discuss ideas for accomplishing the goal of increasing away-from-home recycling opportunities. Increasing availability of recycling in general will lead to increased recovery of plastic bottles.

Discussion Topics:

- David from Kwik Trip and John from Fox River Mall shared experiences and challenges of increasing recycling. Lack of recycling bins, along with bins being available but not placed correctly, were clear challenges identified. Internal sustainability teams play key roles in communicating green efforts throughout the organization. The logistical challenges created from increased recycling efforts, such as needing to increase the frequency of recycling dumpster pick-up, were also discussed.
- Jullie from Coca-Cola explained how they reuse syrup barrels to create recycling containers, and the importance of demonstrating that products are made from recycled plastic to visually relay the story of recycling. Jullie will be looking into how the bin program can be expanded to elsewhere in WI. Andy from Kemps is looking into the possibility of doing the same thing with their food grade barrels.
- Brenda from Keep America Beautiful (KAB) expressed the need to get information to the right place. For example, KAB has recently released a list of Top-10 Tips for Bin Placement list that targets businesses and public spaces. Recycling labels are available and need to be utilized to properly mark recycling bins. She also suggested utilization of donated ad space from malls, convenience stores, sport venues, etc. to promote recycling using the new "I want to be recycled" campaign (visit www.iwanttoberecycled.org). Non-profit partners can customize their campaign media and for-profit businesses can become sponsors of this campaign to gain recognition.
- Resa from NAPCOR reiterated that in order to increase recycling there needs to be a policy driver or a core group that prioritizes recycling consistently to make it work. Resa also suggested developing technical assistance for businesses and large venues that want to increase recycling, such as information on where and how to purchase recycling bins.
- Encouraging participation in existing recognition programs, such as Travel Green Wisconsin, was a potential focus to increase away-from-home recycling opportunities. Businesses may not be aware that these programs exist, or they may not know enough about them to be motivated to participate.
- Working on one business case study to increase recycling was also discussed to show a success story and create a resource for others that want to increase recycling but don't know how. This could model best practices for other businesses.

Potential proposal concentrations:

- Increase the number of recycling receptacles in public places
- Improving public education; increasing awareness; driving public demand
- Share best practices – successful recycling implementation case studies
- Encourage participation in green incentive programs
- Technical assistance for large venues
- Guidance for haulers

Next Steps: Our next meeting will be held in person (with call-in option) in the end of September. Ahead of this meeting, the above ideas will be explored and a progress update will be sent out to the group.