

BEFORE THE METRO COUNCIL

FOR THE PURPOSE OF ADOPTING) RESOLUTION NO. 93-1739A
A POLICY ON PLASTICS RECYCLING)
IN THE METRO REGION) Introduced by Rena Cusma
) Executive Officer

WHEREAS, The Oregon Recycling Act (ORS 459A) stipulates that Metro area wastesheds must achieve a recovery rate of 45 percent by January 1, 1995, and the Regional Solid Waste Management Plan sets a regional waste recovery goal of 56 percent by 2010; and

WHEREAS, The 1989-90 *Waste Characterization Study* indicates that nine percent of the region's wastestream is plastic, and the 1991 *Recycling Level Survey* indicates that only 16 percent of plastic was recycled; and

WHEREAS, The waste management hierarchy adopted by the United States Environmental Protection Agency, State of Oregon, and Metro stipulates waste materials be reduced, reused, recycled, or recovered for energy before being landfilled; and

WHEREAS, The plastics industry has established recycling goals, and promoted the fact that many plastic resins are recyclable; and consumers and businesses therefore expect to recycle post-consumer plastics; and

WHEREAS, Approximately 20 percent of the calls received by Metro's Recycling Information Center concern the difficulty of recycling plastics in the region; and

WHEREAS, The local plastics collection and processing systems are inconsistent, unpredictable and generally not profitable, and recycling businesses have difficulty responding to unfavorable market conditions caused by low prices for recycled resin and lack of demand for end uses; and

WHEREAS, The resolution was submitted to the Executive Officer for consideration and was forwarded to the Council for approval; now therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED,

That Metro supports programs and policies to improve the economic feasibility of recycling plastics in the tri-county area through infrastructure improvements and market development strategies,

That Metro requests a commitment from the Plastics Industry through the Plastics Division of the Oregon Recycling Markets Council, American Plastics Council and/or the Society of the Plastics Industry, Inc. to provide technical and financial support for infrastructure and market development in the Metro region sufficient to keep the local plastics recycling programs viable until long-term solutions have been implemented,

That Metro continues to support the provisions of ORS 459A, including funding by the plastics industry, that promotes plastics recycling through minimum recycled content, recycling rates, reduction or reuse standards by January 1, 1995; and will oppose legislation that grants exemptions or weakens the law, or that requires direct public funding through tip fees or other sources,


That Metro will support other legislation or administrative rules that can provide timely solutions to plastics recycling in the region, including state legislation for "truth in labeling" for plastic packaging and plastic products so that consumers are not misled by inaccurate claims of recyclability or recycled content,

That Metro procurement practices will be modified as necessary to promote purchase of recycled plastic products in order to increase the demand for the material, and that purchase of products with recycled plastic content by other organizations will be promoted through the *Buy Recycled* outreach program,

That Metro will work with other groups to establish cooperative marketing agreements between local recyclers for post-consumer plastics to improve economies of scale and reduce costs,

That Metro will explore with the Clean Washington Center, and other regional interests, the economic and technical feasibility of a privately-financed material recovery facility for plastics to serve the Pacific Northwest region of Oregon, Washington, British Columbia or other viable geographic areas.

ADOPTED by the Metro Council this 28th day of January, 1993.



Judy Wyers, Presiding Officer

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ADOPTED by the Metro Council this _____ day of _____, 1993.

Judy Wyers, Presiding Officer

SOLID WASTE COMMITTEE REPORT

CONSIDERATION OF RESOLUTION NO. 93-1739A, FOR THE PURPOSE OF
ADOPTING A POLICY ON PLASTICS RECYCLING IN THE METRO REGION

Date: January 20, 1993

Presented by: Councilor McLain

Committee Recommendation: At the January 19 meeting, the Committee voted 4-0 to recommend Council adoption of Resolution No. 93-1739. Voting in favor: Councilors Buchanan, McLain, Washington and Wyers. Councilor McFarland was excused.

Committee Issues/Discussion: Debbie Gorham and Leigh Zimmerman, Solid Waste Staff, reviewed the staff report and presented other related information. Gorham noted four principal reasons supporting the need for the resolution. These include: 1) a recent plastic industry ad campaign noting the recyclability of plastics when a relatively small percentage of plastics are actually recycled, 2) difficulty in establishing a plastics recycling infrastructure in the Metro region, 3) possible 1993 state legislation affecting recycling, and 4) the large percentage of Recycling Information Center calls relating to citizen's frustrations concerning the unavailability of plastics recycling opportunities. Gorham noted that plastics make up 9% of the wastestream, but only 16% of this material is recycled.

Gorham explained that the resolution lends Metro's support to: 1) local plastic recycling infrastructure and market development, and 2) existing law designed to encourage plastic recycling. The resolution also states Metro's opposition to changes in existing law that would weaken plastics recycling. Gorham indicated that the resolution is supported by OSPIRG and the Coalition for Plastics Recycling.

Councilor McLain asked about feedback from haulers regarding the resolution. Gorham noted that West Linn had initiated a pilot project to determine if plastic containers of all colors could be economically collected and sorted for recycling. The results indicated that, at present, it is not feasible.

Councilor Gates asked if there is any known opposition to the resolution. Gorham responded that staff has not directly heard of any opposition, but she noted that plastic packaging manufacturers and food processors would probably be opposed.

Bob Martin expressed concern that the plastics industry has not been as involved as other industries in developing recycling infrastructure. He noted that the plastics industry has been advertising that it has spent \$350 million nationally on recycling programs. Martin noted that the paper and glass industries have probably spent that much in Oregon alone.

Gorham noted that an amendment to the original resolution filed with the Council was approved at a joint meeting of the Solid Waste Policy and Technical Advisory Committees. This amendment added language which provides that Metro would not support the use of tip fee or other public sources of funding to improve plastic recycling infrastructure including any regional plastic material recovery facility.

STAFF REPORT

IN CONSIDERATION OF RESOLUTION NO. 93-1739A FOR THE PURPOSE OF ADOPTING A POLICY ON PLASTICS RECYCLING IN THE METRO REGION.

Date: January 13, 1992

Presented by: Leigh Zimmerman

PROPOSED ACTION:

To adopt a resolution establishing Metro's policy on plastics recycling and to determine steps Metro can take, or legislation Metro can support, to improve plastics recycling and market development in the tri-county region. Staff prepared this staff report and resolution in response to the Council Solid Waste Committee's request that a Metro position on plastics recycling in the region be developed.

BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS:

Primary Barriers to Recycling of Post-Consumer Plastics

Although programs to collect and recycle plastics from the public have been in place in the region since the late 1980's, the economic feasibility of recycling the material is still very low. The collection programs, intermediate processing capacity, and market prices for the recovered material are unpredictable. Even though the public wants to recycle plastic (about 20% of the Recycling Information Center's calls are on this subject), local programs continue to be unstable and are often subsidized through rates or private companies.

Major barriers to plastics recycling in Oregon identified by Metro and other groups studying this issue, such as the Coalition for Plastics Recycling and the Plastics Division of the Oregon Recycling Markets Development Council are as follows:

- Few end markets because of lack of demand for products with recycled plastic content; and limited production of new products with recycled content because of concern about quality, performance and cost of recycled plastic resin.
- Unfavorable market conditions due to high price of recycled versus virgin resins. The costs of collection, processing and transportation are too high relative to market value.
- Local recycling companies and plastics processors that are undercapitalized and have difficulty handling poor market conditions and economic downturns; unstable marketing arrangements between collectors and processors.
- Inconsistent collection programs both in terms of types of resins collected and predictability of service.

Large number of plastic resins used in products and packaging with little uniformity in design or content. Similar products use different resins or use more than one type of resin.

Metro's Role

Metro's ability to solve the difficulties of plastics recycling are limited due to lack of control over larger economic factors. To date, Metro's primary role has been to provide education and information through the Recycling Information Center, to conduct research and demonstration projects, and to provide financial assistance through the 1% For Recycling grant program.

In 1992, Metro issued a *Sorting Out Plastics Recycling* brochure to help people identify plastics that can be recycled locally and offered postcards that consumers could send to resin producers, product manufacturers and retail stores to request changes to the current system. Since 1988, the 1% For Recycling program has provided approximately \$300,000 for plastics recycling projects. Waste Reduction staff provide data and technical assistance to individuals, companies and haulers upon request.

In 1991, Metro also supported passage of Oregon Senate Bill 66 which created the Oregon Recycling Markets Development Council and a subsidiary Plastics Division to address barriers to recycled plastics markets. The law also established minimum content legislation and other recycling standards to be achieved by January 1, 1995. In the legislative interim, some plastics companies and product manufacturers have indicated they cannot make this timetable and have requested exemptions or extensions to the law. Metro has provided written and oral testimony to the Department of Environmental Quality and the state markets council that opposes any extension or exemption. We have also supported more aggressive industry involvement and funding.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Staff recommends that the Council adopt Resolution No. 93-1739A establishing a policy on plastics recycling. The resolution supports a more aggressive program, including passage of necessary legislation, to overcome barriers to plastics recycling and market development. Furthermore, the resolution identifies programs Metro will undertake or support in conjunction with other agencies to provide local solutions. These will include, but not be limited to, the following:

1. Modify Metro's procurement practices to promote purchase of products with recycled plastic content. Promote purchase of recycled plastics products to other governments and businesses through the *Buy Recycled* outreach program.
2. Work with other groups to establish cooperative marketing agreements between local collectors to improve economies of scale by increased volume and reduced transportation costs. Investigate standardizing types of resins collected.

3. Support the existing or a stronger state law to promote market development for plastics through minimum content or recycling rates to be achieved by January 1, 1995. Do not support legislation that grants exemptions or weakens the existing law.
4. Promote plastic industry financing of local infrastructure improvements through capital investments and short-term market subsidies, if necessary, for recovered plastics. **Do not support direct public funding of these improvements through tip fees or other sources.**
5. Explore with the Clean Washington Center, and other regional interests, the feasibility of a material recovery and processing facility to serve the Pacific Northwest region of Oregon, Washington, British Columbia or other viable geographic area. **Such a facility should not be considered unless it is economically viable and is privately financed.**

EXECUTIVE OFFICER RECOMMENDATION:

The Executive Officer recommends approval of Resolution No. 93-1739 A.

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