

Zero Waste Washington 2019 Spring Quarterly Enewsletter

Paint Stewardship bill passed; bag bill failed to advance

The 2019 legislative session was a banner year for environmental bills. Thanks to support from you and the leadership of our environmental champions in the legislature, we are thrilled to announce that 5 of 9 bills that we and our partners worked on are passing into law! Now, for example, residents across Washington will be able to recycle old paint for free starting in November 2020! Unfortunately, the bag bill didn't make it.

Big successes

Paint Stewardship: Zero Waste Washington, together with our many partners, especially municipalities, has worked for 8 years to promote an industry-supported bill that will allow people to drop off old paint at paint stores and other retailers. It is really exciting that the paint bill (HB 1652) finally passed this year in the last few days of the legislative session. Representative Strom Peterson championed HB 1652 and worked tirelessly all session to get it lifted.

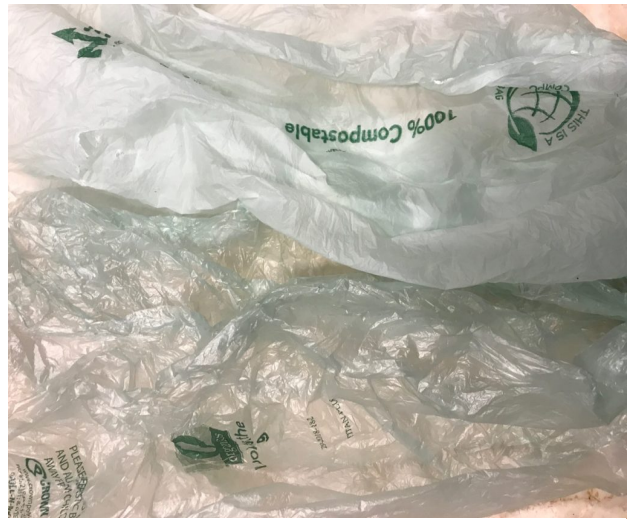


Latex paint can easily be recycled into a suite of colors of “new” latex paint. GreenSheen, out of Colorado, has started operations in Kent, WA, and will produce recycled latex paint that is sold at Habitat for Humanity and other store for about half the price of new paint. Oil paint will be offered for reuse or will be disposed of as hazardous waste.

Unlike other producer responsibility laws in Washington State though, such as e-waste and safe medicine return, where the costs are internalized, the cost of the program will be directly passed along to consumers. In this program, a small fee will be added to each gallon of new paint sold at retail, appearing as a line item on receipts. This fee goes to a 3rd party nonprofit organization associated with paint manufacturers. This program will fund all costs including recycling and disposal of the paint as well as reimbursement of the WA State Department of Ecology's expenses associated with oversight.

Compostability labeling: Consumers are confused by what items are compostable. A terrific new bill (HB 1569), championed by Representative Bill Ramos, passed the legislature and requires that compostable products must be compostable (i.e., meet standards!). All of those products with misleading claims on their packaging such as “biodegradable,” “decomposable,” “oxo-degradable,” etc. will not be allowed to be sold in Washington. Compostable items must now be clearly labeled, and manufacturers are encouraged to use green or brown graphics and lettering. Compostable utensils and film bags must be green or brown tinted if they are compostable and may not be green or brown if they are not. This will help clean up our commercial compost. People will be more easily able to identify compostable forks!

Plastic Package Stewardship: Although several single-use plastic bills addressing bags, food serviceware and straws failed to advance, an important bill (SB 5397) addressing plastic packaging did pass. The bill requires Ecology to study the amount, costs, and current end-of-life for the huge load of plastic packaging that plagues our daily lives and overloads and causes major contamination problems in our recycling system. The results of this study bill will be used to set up a plastic packaging producer responsibility bill for the 2021 legislative session. Senator Christine Rolfes worked hard on this bill and made sure it has strong legs for future and meaningful actions to revamp our recycling system.



Can you tell which bag is compostable?

Food waste: Right now, 17% of what we send to the landfill in Washington is food waste. And shockingly, about half of that is edible food! HB 1114, championed by Representative Beth Doglio, sets a goal to reduce our food waste by 50% by 2030. It also requires a study of the current barriers and needs for safe transport and use of rescued food by food banks and other food programs and improved diversion of inedible food for composting, agriculture and other uses.

Restoration of the litter tax: Groceries, convenience stores and other retailers in Washington pay a 0.015% tax on items commonly tossed in public spaces, i.e. litter. This tax goes into a fund that is supposed to support recycling, litter cleanups and other activities to reduce waste and pollution. During the recession, over \$10 million per year of this fund was diverted by the legislature to supplement the budget for State Parks. We worked with partners this year to successfully restore the bulk of this fund back to its intended purposes. Now only \$1.25 million per year will go to parks.



Bag monster and bag bill supporters at Environmental Lobby Day in January 2019

Other bills: Zero Waste Washington also worked to support Sustainable recycling (HB 1543) which will create a research center to develop and stimulate end markets for recycling and create recycling contamination reduction plans, and a bill that overhauls our state's Model Toxics Control Act (MTCA) (SB 5993) to bring in more funds and stabilize that funding which is used for cleanups and waste reduction, and a bill to allow human composting (SB 5001).

Bag bill: We are sad that the bag bill and other single-use plastic bills didn't move forward this year. Major thanks go to Sen. Mona Das, Rep. Strom Peterson, Rep. Joe Fitzgibbon, Sen. Christine Rolfes, and Sen. Reuven Carlyle for their tireless work to support these bills and a whole host of other environmental bills. We will be back, with our partners and the support of many of you next year!

Big thanks also goes to our lobbyist Bruce Wishart. He is awesome!

For more information about these bills and the bills that failed to advance this year click here:

<https://zerowastewashington.org/legislative-work/>

Thank you all for your help in moving these important bills forward. If you have any questions, please contact Heather at heather@zerowastewashington.org.

Do you want to “bring your own container”?

By Elisabeth Archer



Consumers who want to fill their own containers at food establishments are usually denied this opportunity. Why? Except in a few circumstances (primarily for hot beverages), the current Washington State Food Code does not allow it. Zero Waste Washington is working to change that in the current update of Washington’s Food Code. Public meetings are scheduled for this summer and we need your help.

The Food Safety Advisory Council is a key player in the current update of Washington’s Food Code. This 15-member council represents stakeholders within retail food service and works in partnership with Washington State Department of Health. The Department has just finished the first draft of revised rules. These will be up for informal public comment this summer.

Zero Waste Washington proposed language to the Department of Health that makes it possible for food establishments to allow customers to bring in their own food containers to fill themselves (non-prepared foods) or be filled by retail employees (prepared foods), in certain circumstances.

State Food Code uses FDA code as a model

As background, it is important to understand that the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) updates their Food Code guidelines every four years. 2017 is their most recent update. Each state’s food jurisdiction is responsible for developing and updating their own food safety rules using the FDA Food Code as a model. Most states do not keep to the four-year interval of the FDA. In fact, Washington state’s last major update was in May 2013. An update for Washington State is now in the works.

The 2017 FDA Food Code guidelines has a new section called “Refilling Returnables.” While this is a good beginning it is not as comprehensive as what many consumers are asking for. Thus, Zero Waste Washington has been working with the Council to take these guidelines further to offer more options to food establishments and consumers, while at the same time mitigating any foreseeable hazards to public health.

Public meetings this summer

The next phase in this process is a series of public presentations as part of an informal public comment period around the state of the proposed code revisions. We will be participating in some of these and can provide talking points to those of you who would like to attend and make comment:

- Benton-Franklin Health District – July 16, 2019: 2-4pm
- Spokane Regional Health District: – July 17, 2019: 9-11am
- Ferndale Library (Bellingham) – July 22, 2019: 1-3pm
- Renton Technical College – July 23, 2019: 1-3pm
- Vancouver Library – July 24, 2019: 2-4pm
- Seattle – location and date TBD

In September, the Food Safety Advisory Council will review all comments received and prepare the final draft for presentation to the Washington State Board of Health. The draft code will then go to a formal public comment period, probably in January 2020.

We hope the food code will offer more flexibility to food establishments and consumers for reducing waste and allowing consumer-owned containers to be filled under safe conditions for all.

Please contact Elisabeth at elisabethwarcher@yahoo.com or Heather at Heather@zerowastewashington.org for more information or to let us know that you would like to attend any of the public meetings and would like sample talking points.



GiveBIG is May 8: Early donations are underway



Zero Waste Washington relies on donations from our wonderful zero waste community. Thank you to those who have already made **early gifts through GiveBIG**. A generous donor is matching all gifts up to \$5000, so your early donation (whether \$250 or \$20) will have twice the impact.

GiveBIG is an annual day of giving that is important for the nonprofit community. We would be so grateful if you can include Zero Waste Washington in your list of organizations this year.

GiveBIG here: <https://www.givebig2019.org/zero-waste-washington-1>

Thank you so much!

Duwamish Valley Youth tackle plastic pollution

By Marisol Diaz

Plastic pollution is a major problem across the globe and in our cities. Thanks to a King County Waterworks grant and a King Conservation District grant, Zero Waste Washington and the Duwamish Valley Youth Corps staff are training youth to educate their community about the plastic pollution problem and how to prevent and reduce plastic pollution. This goal will be achieved by two projects.



Through the current job training program known as the Duwamish Valley Youth Corps, youth will participate in focus groups to identify barriers and motivators in their communities and learn outreach, storytelling and video editing skills to educate their community about plastic pollution prevention and reduction.

Afterwards, youth members will be eligible to participate in an internship program that will enable them to conduct a litter assessment in the Duwamish Valley, followed by outreach and engagement to businesses on ways to reduce and prevent plastic pollution.

The experience so far



Working with a new group of people can be challenging, especially if the new group of people are teenagers! In early April, I began my first week working with the Duwamish Valley Youth Corps with surveying the youth about their knowledge about the global plastic pollution problem and their current observations.

In week two, Tere Carral and her team from Bridge Latino conducted focus groups with the youth and significant adults from their lives (such as a parent or neighbor). The topics were related to their community and their relationship with

waste, plastic, and what gets flushed down the toilet. One focus group was conducted in Spanish, one in English and one in both Spanish and English.

Gaining trust

On my third week I was expected to direct a room full of teenagers' attention towards plastic pollution. Needless to say, I was a bit of a stranger to the youth. Thankfully, I did not feel nervous engaging with the youth. I took the previous weeks as opportunities to begin building a relationship with the youth cohort. I needed to let them know that they could trust me. This meant giving out my personal cellphone number and letting them know they could contact me with any questions they had about sessions, attendance, and activity logistics.

To show them that I am relatable and not some distant adult, I worked to use terminology/slang related to their generation, use current pop/hip hop cultural references, and chiming in with my own personal experiences as they discussed current situations they were facing such as going to school and having an after-school job, applying to colleges, etc. Finally, I used humor to connect with youth to show them I'm a fun person. As I continued these types of relationship-building techniques, I was able to achieve more trust from the group as a leader they can turn to with program related questions. My efforts, though, will always be second to their number one leader, Carmen Martinez—the Duwamish Valley Youth Corps coordinator. She is the greatest resource for all the youth from the program and South Park.

Reflections

Working with the youth so far, I've come to learn they are a motivated and intelligent group. They all continue to participate in the next round of youth corps activities when a new cohort begins. They respect and admire Carmen Martinez. They all want and are planning for a bright future as they

demonstrate their commitment, appreciation and joy working in the youth corps. They believe that being part of the youth corps is a great privilege and opportunity and are grateful for the program. The program allows for students to truly showcase their abilities, learn new skills, and even improve their school performance. Two students in particular, stand out to me. Carmen told me about the first student who had really low grades in school before she joined the program, but after three years in the youth corps, she is now a straight A student. Another student at first glance is a quiet character, but when he takes the opportunity to speak, he brings great ideas and asks great questions that invite others to begin or join a discussion.



Other activities



Mario teaching Duwamish Valley Youth Corps participants about video techniques

As part of this project, the youth are also learning about video production from Latino NW Communications, which includes learning how to hold a video camera, how to do close-ups, and learning the correct terminology such as “panning right/left.” I provided an introduction to the global issue of plastic pollution, and then last Saturday we conducted a litter clean-up (which will be followed-up by a litter assessment) at River City Skatepark.

I am looking forward to the outreach we’ll be conducting in the community about plastic pollution prevention. I

believe the youth will really enjoy conducting outreach as many of them love to talk up a storm!

For more information about the Duwamish youth projects, please contact Marisol at marisol@zerowastewashington.org.

Waste monster project in schools kicks off

By Maria Teresa Gámez

Zero Waste Washington kicked off a new project with local elementary schools and other partners to educate students about waste prevention and contamination reduction. These fun, interactive assembly skits feature waste monsters. These skits are available for free for schools within 60 miles of Seattle.

Funded by Seattle Public Utilities and the Washington State Department of Ecology (and aligned with their messaging), the skits focus on the challenges that the schools are facing in their cafeterias.

A wonderful group of volunteers helped conceive and design the waste monster costumes and are helping act as waste monsters in the skits.

On April 22, we had our very first Waste Monster skit at Kimball Elementary School in Seattle. Kimball Elementary has done an amazing job educating their children about plastics and the risk they represent to our environment. Below is a photo gallery from that day.

We had the pleasure to share with a wonderful young audience eager to learn more about waste reduction and to share good practices at their school.

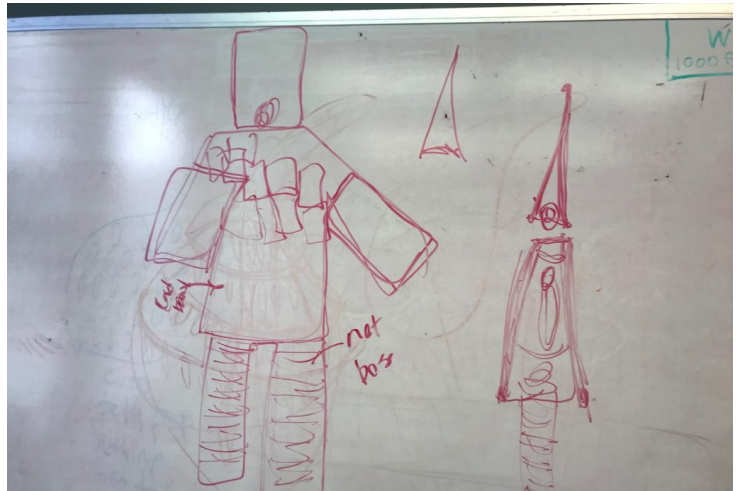


Composta, our compost monster, was quite popular that day. Children at Kimball seem to know the importance of composting. Kudos to their teachers and to their Green Team!



Betty Bottle found a lot of opposition in the audience... Kimball is installing two water and bottle refilling stations and is promoting the use of reusable bottles.

Our Bag Monster got a lot of attention from the students. They were eager to tell him that he and his kind shouldn't be swimming freely in the ocean or flying in our woods. Our Wrapper Monster, Wrap-Bot, had a lot fun teaching kids where all the wrappers and bags should go!



Whiteboarding the costume design (Wrap Bot costume)

Plastic Summit, Bellingham, April 27, 2019: Big success!

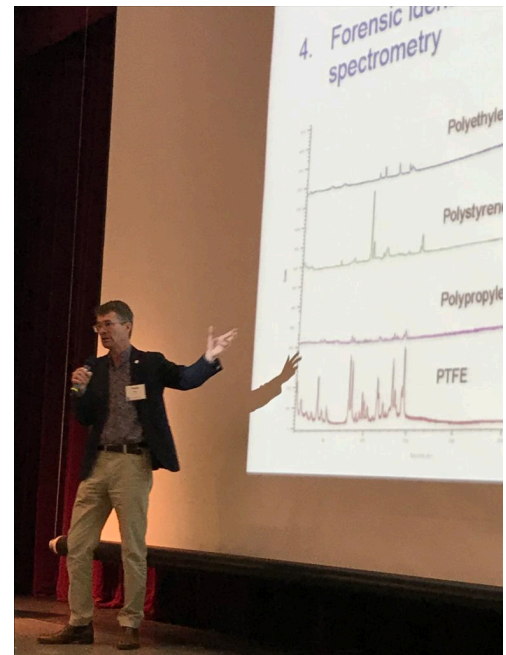
On Saturday, April 27, 2019, Zero Waste Washington partnered with the Mt. Baker Group of the Sierra Club to host an all-day event, *The Truth About Plastics*, an educational plastics forum, at Whatcom Community College in Bellingham. Almost 200 people attended and learned about the impacts of single-use plastics on humans and wildlife and potential solutions.

Speaker recap

The keynote speaker was Dr. Peter Ross, Vice-President of Research at Ocean Wise, in Vancouver BC. Dr. Ross is one of the top international researchers on microplastics. He and his team are studying the sources and impact of small plastic pieces and fragments in our marine waters, especially those impacting salmon and marine mammals. REI, Patagonia, Arc'teryx and other major recreational clothing companies are funding his research on plastic fibers shedding from clothing and other textiles

Dr. Patricia Hunt, Meyer Distinguished Professor in the School of Molecular Biosciences, Washington State University, Pullman, spoke about her work investigating toxic chemicals in plastics. In 1998, Dr. Hunt discovered the impact of bisphenol A (BPA) on the ability of mice to reproduce. This led to the worldwide phaseout of BPA in water bottles and other items.

Dr. Mark Peyron, Asst. Professor, Plastics & Composites Engineering, Western Washington University, gave a talk about Plastics 101. He researches biodegradable plastics, polymer characterization and additives in plastics. Dr. Peyron and his students do research to help the Joint Center for Aerospace Technology Innovation, which develops solutions to help move aerospace forward in Washington state.



Alex Ramel, Extreme Oil Director, Stand.earth helps develop sustainable local communities. He discussed key campaigns related to reducing fossil fuel exports and major export facilities in Washington.

Gwen Larned, former Zero Waste Coordinator, WWU, is a young leader and educator on how to attain a zero waste lifestyle. While at WWU, she helped create innovative solutions to address recycling and waste reduction. She talked about how to motivate people to adopt zero waste practices.

Rick Eggerth, a retired attorney with years of toxic waste litigation experience against the oil industry, was a co-convener of the forum. He is Vice-Chair of the Mt. Baker Group of the Sierra Club. Rick gave a fascinating talk about the advertising history of the petrochemical giants' development of the plastic industry.

Heather Trim of Zero Waste Washington was the final speaker and provided updates on the statewide plastics-related legislation and what is happening at the local level. Zero Waste Washington works to support local communities pass city and county ordinances by providing support, technical assistance and model ordinances.

The videos of each presentation from the event will be posted soon, but in the meantime, you can view the PowerPoint presentations here: <https://zerowastewashington.org/the-truth-about-plastics-summit-bellingham/>

We can't do it without you!

Thank you for all that you do in your own lives and in the community to help create a zero waste future. Actions you take every day help reduce the amount of waste going into the trash!

Thank you, too, for your generous support which is paving the way for a zero waste future in Washington.

Donate here <https://zerowastewashington.org/donate/>

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