

**Recommendations to Manhattan SW Task Force**  
**MCSWAB Waste Prevention Committee**  
**Discussion Draft -- April 1, 1997**

**Overall Waste Prevention Goals**

The City should reaffirm its commitment to a waste prevention goal of 9% by 2002, when Fresh Kills is to close. This gives the City five more years to reach this goal than the 1997 timeframe originally proposed by the City and by the State's Solid Waste Management Act. We know that the Solid Waste Hierarchy places waste prevention at the top from an environmental point-of-view, but it is not well known how economically advantageous it is. Export will increase expenditures for disposal by at least \$50/ton. Prevention of 9% of the City's waste stream will result in avoided cost savings of about \$230,000 per day (over \$70 million annually), assuming a daily total residential/institutional waste stream of 13,000 TPD and net avoided costs of \$200/ton. Of course, if collection and export become more expensive, the benefits of waste prevention become even more attractive.

Waste Prevention efforts should not cease when Fresh Kills closes, but should continue as long as there is potential for instituting programs and legislation to reduce waste further. The City should also commit to future waste prevention goals of 15% by 2006 and 20% by 2010. To ensure that no impediments are set up to achieving these goals (and those for increasing recycling and composting), it would be preferable for the City not to sign long-term export contracts for most of the City's waste.

**Operational Changes Needed to Achieve Goals**

Prevention of residential / institutional wastes faces numerous obstacles: lack of awareness of the economic and environmental benefits of waste prevention, inadequacy of purchasing options, lack of incentives to reduce waste, and perhaps, most important, lack of political will to follow-through on waste prevention solutions. We propose two alternative means of restructuring City government to improve how waste prevention is implemented, either of which would be far superior to the current state of affairs, in which waste prevention is chronically, insufficiently staffed and inadequately funded, and where it is subsidiary to and in some cases merged with recycling functions.

1. To raise the profile of waste prevention and stimulate progress on the local level, the City should create the New York City Waste Prevention Commission. The Mayor, City Council, Public Advocate, and Borough Presidents would appoint some commissioners; others would be ex officio members from DOS, EDC, DCA, the SWABs and CRAB.

The Commission would take over waste prevention functions currently residing at DOS, to wit, it would operate educational and technical assistance programs and propose legislation to develop and promote residential and institutional waste prevention in New York City. For example, the Commission would develop public awareness campaigns, work in partnership with businesses and product designers and manufacturers, review and improve agency procurement practices, and assist economic development of waste prevention business enterprises (e.g., repair, reuse, rental) in the City. The Commission would be funded by an allocation of \$1.00 / ton for all waste collected by DOS. There would be an additional allocation of \$2.00 / ton for waste exported.

2. Alternatively, and since waste prevention should be at least equal to recycling in the structure of DOS, the waste prevention functions and funding should be separated from recycling, and the head of waste prevention should be at a level equal to that of recycling.

In either case, the funding for waste prevention needs to be increased, more staff lines are needed to design and implement successful programs (we suggest at least 10 to start, ramping up to 25), and these staff must have the ability to learn about successful waste prevention initiatives developed elsewhere and to conduct pilot programs to adapt these programs to work successfully in New York City. Therefore, there should be sufficient funding for waste prevention staff to attend and present at important conferences in the field, and to hire the services of consultants on an ongoing basis.

### **Specific Programmatic and Legislative Recommendations**

Existing DOS programs have not instilled broad public awareness or acceptance of waste prevention. Public education undertaken by DOS and/or the Commission should work to establish firmly the waste prevention concept into the Public Mind as a basis for future programmatic actions. Further, if the City moves to export a large percentage of its waste and signs long-term contracts, then there is less impetus to reduce. We propose the following be undertaken to achieve the above waste prevention goals.

#### **General**

- All contracts with the private sector to collect, transport, process, recycle, compost, and/or dispose of solid waste or solid waste-derived resources, should include waste prevention services (e.g., education, research, establishment of a reuse center) as a deliverable of the contract.

#### **Educational Programs**

- Develop a multi-media waste prevention campaign, designed not only to inform about waste prevention opportunities and the beneficial environmental effects, but also to provide reasons in order to motivate consumers to actually change their purchasing and product reuse, repair, and maintenance behaviors. At a minimum, the City should make continuing and active use of the following media: print, television, radio, inserts in utility bills, billboards, mass transit, World Wide Web, and should structure some of its educational programs such that there is a coordinated "Blitz" using all media, many approaches for different kinds of people, concentrated on single issues (e.g., Buy Durable) over six-month periods. These campaigns and educational materials should be developed with the advice of the SWABs.
- Work with the Board of Education to provide guidance, develop and implement a waste prevention curriculum module for use in Earth Science and Environmental Science classes. Curricula should be developed for grade school as well. Council on the Environment has a curriculum after which one could be modeled. Also develop curricula in other disciplines (e.g., math, geography, civics) to integrate waste prevention.
- Phase in community-based waste prevention education centers (for disseminating education / rental, reuse, and repair information, and referrals to repair shops, / swap or consignment shops / household hazwaste drop-off).
- Work with (providing technical assistance as necessary) to nonprofits, schools, and institutions to create public and organizational waste prevention education campaigns.

## **Reuse / Repair**

- Sponsor school-based reuse/repair training programs in each school district and the high schools. Programs can be modeled on the successful "Recycle a Bicycle" program and seek partnership with repair/reuse businesses that can utilize apprentices generated by such training programs. Expand this program to target other kinds of durable products including furniture, computers, electronics, and clothing.
- In concert with EDC, sponsor economic development programs designed to improve the health and extent of the repair/reuse industries in New York City. Specifically, extend these programs to reuse/repair of building products, appliances, and furniture, among others. Develop these programs in partnership with schools producing apprentices, trade schools, and local development organizations.
- Implement information and promotional campaigns for repaired, rented, and reused products. This should include promotion of existing businesses.
- Sponsor neighborhood swap meets and other seasonal waste exchanges.
- Expand Materials for the Arts, and fund the expansion of its base of operations to include distribution of reused products to all nonprofits, and eventually the public (for hard-to-place goods). Expand MFA to include operations in each borough.
- Set Up a Waste Prevention Fund to lend seed money for capital purchases that promote waste prevention and other related feasibility studies.
- Implement Reuse Hotline, not only for use by business, but also by the residential sector.

## **Business Programs**

- Retool the "Partnership for Waste Prevention" by requiring initial certification and annual recertification by the Commission based on performance standards. The current program, which has no minimum standards of performance, has produced disappointing results. Such standards should include a minimum level of effort as well as annual reporting requirements for amounts of waste prevented, program costs, and avoided costs. This certification would increase the credibility of membership and give participants a bona fide basis to make marketable environmental claims.
- Expand the Partnership by at least 50 organizations per year. Half of these should be consumer product or packaging designers and manufacturers. The purpose of expanding to these businesses is not just to reduce the commercial waste stream, but to reduce the volume and toxicity of products and packaging (and increase product durability) that businesses design and sell to the residential and institutional sectors (which then becomes waste).
- Work with members of the Partnership and other retailers to create a public campaign for waste prevention. Business interests should provide financial support to identify and promote waste prevention choices for consumers. A model for this type of public campaign is the King County, WA "Waste Free Fridays" campaign; another is a campaign to give discounts for customers bringing reusable cups and bags.

## **Agency / Institutional Programs**

- Encourage and provide technical assistance and incentives for local design schools (Pratt, FIT, etc...) to teach how to incorporate waste prevention in product and packaging design.
- Provide education and technical assistance on how to achieve waste prevention to institutions.
- Establish Quantity-Based User Incentives (QBUI) for City agencies by 1998 based on a baseline of waste and recyclables generated by each agency in 1997. The savings in collection and disposal costs resulting from reductions in the disposal of non-recyclable wastes arising from waste prevention programs instituted by an agency, should be shared between the agency and DOS, hence QBUI, or incentive to reduce waste and recycle. Agencies should be encouraged to provide incentives (rewards) to employees for waste prevention and new ideas.

- Establish Quantity-Based User Fees (QBUF) for non-recyclable waste disposed by institutions served by DOS by 1998. Accomplish this either via DOS charges for service or privatization.

### **Research**

- Finish SAIC studies of products and packaging in the waste stream and methods of measurement of waste prevention. If more work is needed to perfect these studies, commit to funding them.
- Update the products and packaging waste composition studies for each update of the City's solid waste management plan. Utilize this information in targeting product and packaging types for reduction and reuse programs and legislation.
- After SAIC studies are done, commence documentation of every City-sponsored waste prevention activity in terms of costs and savings, in dollars and tons.
- Conduct a study of methods used successfully in other urban areas of implementing residential QBUFs; include methods of overcoming barriers to QBUFs, and apartment building participation.
- Subsequently, conduct pilot studies of QBUFs in different types of buildings in New York City. Assess how QBUFs can be applied to all building owners (regardless of building size).
- Subsequently, after QBUFs are assessed all building owners, research how to extend the fee structure to tenants in larger buildings.
- Study how the City can increase manufacturer responsibility for the disposal of packaging and products.

### **Legislation**

- Codify the 1996 Mayoral Directive on Agency Waste Prevention for both agencies and institutions from which DOS collects waste and recyclables.
- Enact waste prevention procurement legislation that establishes performance standards and reporting requirements for city agencies, institutions, and contractors. Update and expand Intro. 509 to include these.
- Enact agency procurement legislation addressing purchase of products and packaging, which contain less toxics content where such alternatives are available.
- Codify prior Presidential and Mayoral Executive Order on purchase of recycled paper.
- Enact legislation to provide economic incentives (e.g. tax rebates) to refurbishers, repair stores, second-hand, rental, thrift, consignment, and cleaning stores.
- Enact legislation to require each retailer to buy and post DOS Bring Your Own Bag laminated signs at or near each cash register.
- Enact legislation to require retailers to charge consumers a set fee of at least five cents for shopping and other bags, and disposable eating utensils, cups, plates, straws, and napkins.
- Enact legislation to require dry cleaners and fast food restaurants charge for disposable bags, cutlery, napkins, etc..., accept hangers for reuse, and post signs regarding these requirements.
- Enact legislation requiring retailers allot a minimum amount of shelf-space for products packaged in bulk, in refillable containers, in concentrate form, and in packaging returnable for reuse.
- Enact legislation to promote sale within New York City of products packaged with less or reusable packaging with more recycled content, greater recyclability, and less toxicity.
- Enact legislation to require that all durable products sold in NYC to carry warranties for a minimum of three years (the US Dept of Commerce definition of durable), and that this be on the product label.
- Enact legislation requiring direct mailers doing business with consumers in NYC to provide an invitation to customers to remove their names from their mailing list and their address rental list, as well as either a postage-paid postcard or a toll free telephone number for this purchase, in each catalog or piece of mail distributed to consumers in NYC.

- Enact Advance Disposal Fees to impact the designers and manufacturers of overly packaged products, and for disposable, nonrepairable, nonrecyclable, nonrecycled, and toxic-content products.
- Enact legislation requiring that all retailers of motor oil be required to display a sign informing consumers where to bring used oil for re-refining.
- Instruct Dept. of Finance to start itemizing trash collection on residential property tax bills in preparation for substituting quantity-based user fees for garbage taxes.

### **Lobbying**

- Lead coalition of cities in supporting federal legislation, which would require that senders of direct mail pay for return postage for, rejected mailings.