



Northwest Product Stewardship Council

Washington Members' Position Statement on Product Stewardship Policies FINAL DRAFT 07-23-14

I. Purpose

The purpose of this statement is to define the position of the Washington State members of the Northwest Product Stewardship Council (NWPSC) regarding policies on product stewardship. Washington members of the NWPSC support the development of product stewardship policies for products that contain toxic materials or are hard-to-handle and that minimize the adverse environmental and health impacts throughout the lifecycle of the product, but especially at the end of life, when the product is no longer wanted by the consumer.

II. Background

The NWPSC is an unincorporated association of government organizations in Washington and Oregon that is comprised of a Steering Committee, Associates and Subcommittees. The NWPSC explores policy approaches, provides policy analysis on legislative proposals to policy makers and stakeholders, and tracks legislation, but is not a lobbying organization.

The NWPSC's mission is to enhance Washington's and Oregon's reuse, recycling and waste management systems by working with the waste and recycling industry, consumers, manufacturers and others to connect producers with the costs associated with the end-of-life management of their products to provide incentives for reducing waste, increasing recyclability, and reducing the toxicity of their products.

Product Stewardship is defined as a materials management strategy that means whoever designs, produces, sells, or uses a product shares responsibility for minimizing the product's environmental impact throughout its life cycle. The primary responsibility lies with the product producers, who have the greatest ability to minimize the adverse impacts of the product on the environment and human health.

Product stewardship policies connect product producers and others in the supply chain to the full life cycle of their products. Product stewardship policies, either legislative or voluntary, shift the responsibility for financing end-of-life product management from municipalities and their ratepayers to product producers and consumers. Producers provide sustainable and dedicated financing for stewardship programs by including the costs of proper end-of-life management in their business costs and/or their product prices. These costs are passed on to consumers that use and benefit from the product, rather than externalizing the costs to local governments and to their ratepayers.

Product stewardship policies are an important approach toward achieving the NWPSC's vision of a prosperous and sustainable society where waste and toxicity are minimized and products are designed to be reused or recycled. Other policy approaches are also critical to achieving this vision including, but not limited to: consumer education, strategies to increase recycling rates, improved chemicals regulation, green chemistry strategies, incentives to develop recyclable materials markets, and green design incentives. Together these strategies can move us towards a more sustainable materials management economy.

III. Position Statement

A. Goals of Product Stewardship Policies

The Washington members of the NWPSC support product stewardship policies that significantly improve the management of hazardous and solid wastes in the Northwest. Effective product stewardship programs can:

- Increase the proper management of toxic materials, keep them out of the garbage and solid waste landfills and incinerators and reduce human exposure and environmental pollution;
- Increase the recovery of recyclable materials that are used to make new products;

- Provide more convenient and equitable access to collection services to benefit all users of the waste management system;
- Provide a sustainable and equitable financing mechanism;
- Reduce the cost burden of waste management for local governments, to the benefit of taxpayers and ratepayers.
- Connect manufacturers to the end-of-life management of their products and provide incentives for improvements in product design that reduce toxicity, reduce waste, and increase recyclability.
- Add jobs in waste management and recycling industries by utilizing and enhancing the existing waste management infrastructure.

B. Application of Product Stewardship Policies

NWPSC supports holding product producers responsible for the life cycle impacts of their products, especially with regard to toxicity, reuse or recycling, and overall sustainability. At the same time, we are committed to ensuring that product stewardship policies are applied in ways that support and complement existing waste and recycling systems in our communities, including the system regulated by the WA Utilities and Transportation Commission that has been built through a public-private partnership in our state. Washington members of the NWPSC support development of product stewardship policies to address any or all of the following issues:

- Certain products contain toxic materials that require safe and transparent management to prevent harm to people and the environment.
- Certain products are expensive and hard to handle in the current waste and recycling system.
- There is insufficient funding to manage certain products at end-of-life and to increase the amount of products that can be collected and recycled.
- The infrastructure and services for the collection, transportation and/or processing of certain products is not readily available or convenient across the state.
- Special collection, handling, recycling or disposal procedures are needed to complement the existing effective waste and recycling system.

C. Legislated Product Stewardship Policies

Legislated product stewardship policies should be developed in coordination with all stakeholders including producers, distributors, retailers, waste management companies, recyclers and processors, non-profit organizations, state agencies, local governments, consumers, and others. Key components of effective stewardship policies should:

- Establish a level playing field by requiring all producers of similar products to finance and participate in the end-of-life management of their products.
- Provide a sustainable and equitable financing mechanism.
- Allow multiple stewardship organizations to participate in a stewardship system.
- Define responsibilities for product producers and other stakeholders.
- Support and complement existing waste and recycling systems in our communities.
- Encourage the use of local collection, transportation, recycling, and processing service providers where they exist and are available.
- Require collection/recycling/processing standards that protect human health and the environment and transparency about final disposition of all collected materials.
- Establish requirements for convenient statewide collection/take back locations.
- Establish performance metrics and goals for recycling and proper management.
- Require effective public education and program promotion.
- Require regular reporting to ensure that program operations and financing are transparent to government, stakeholders, and citizens.
- Require oversight and enforcement by government.
- Establish mechanisms for evaluation, with input from stakeholders, and a process for continual program improvement