

Date: March 6, 2019

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General Manager Hara,

The Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC) has received briefings and discussed responsible recycling and issues around the export of mixed plastics and contaminated plastic bags and film over the last year. At the [May 2018 SWAC meeting](#), SWAC members unanimously agreed that removing plastic bags from curbside recycling would be a good policy for SPU to adopt.

At the February 2019 SWAC meeting, SWAC members reviewed the Responsible Recycling Task Force (RRTF) recommendation that plastic bags be removed from curbside collection due to their many negative impacts. We learned that loose plastic bags regularly get caught in the machinery when sorted at the Material Recovery Facility (MRF). Further, for the plastic bags that are successfully sorted, there is a lack of domestic markets for low-grade contaminated film. We advise against exporting low-grade plastic film to international markets, i.e. Southeast Asia, due to adverse environmental impacts, particularly the emission of greenhouse gases.

We support, as an alternative to curbside, retailer take-back of clean, dry bags so long as those bags can be responsibly recycled domestically. The plastic bag and film industry must lead the way through expanding their [Wrap Recycling Action Program \(WRAP\)](#) in the greater Seattle area, so that take-back locations are widely available and ensuring that the collected film is responsibly recycled. WRAP is a project of the American Chemistry Council that promotes retailer collection of a wide range of clean plastic films and bags.

In future SWAC meetings we will continue to review additional RRTF recommendations. We appreciate the work of the RRTF and commend SPU for its involvement.

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Respectfully,

Dirk Wassink: Chair  
Alessandra Pistoia: Vice Chair