


State of Oregon
Department of Environmental Quality

Memorandum

Date: Nov. 16, 2012

To: Environmental Quality Commission

From: Dick Pedersen, Director 

Subject: Agenda item B, Action item: Adopt Materials Management in Oregon: 2050 Vision and Framework for Action
Dec. 6-7, 2012, EQC meeting

Why this is important Oregon law cites the need to conserve resources and energy, and acknowledges limits in the environment's ability to absorb the environmental impacts of increasing demand for materials and products, which include greenhouse gas emissions, toxic chemicals, pollution and resource depletion. Oregon is recognized as a leader in conserving resources through recycling and waste prevention. Yet, to effectively address evolving challenges and opportunities, Oregon must systematically consider environmental impacts and actions to address them across the full life of materials. The full life cycle includes waste and also product and material design, production and use. This holistic approach is called "materials management." DEQ proposes a shift from managing wastes to managing materials to achieve the best environmental results at the lowest cost to society. Materials Management in Oregon: 2050 Vision and Framework for Action envisions a future where "Oregonians produce and use materials responsibly: conserving resources – protecting the environment – living well." The Framework for Action will help DEQ effectively shape state policies and programs to achieve the 2050 Vision in a rapidly changing world.

DEQ recommendation and EQC motion DEQ recommends that the commission adopt Materials Management in Oregon: 2050 Vision and Framework for Action, seen here as attachment A, to update Oregon's State Integrated Resource and Solid Waste Management Plan.

Background Oregon's State Integrated Resource and Solid Waste Management Plan (1995-2005) has guided statewide policy regarding solid waste management and waste prevention. Much has changed since EQC adopted this plan in 1994. Current research confirms that the vast majority of environmental impacts result from decisions made in design, production and consumption – not waste management. While updating the management plan, DEQ aimed to more effectively reduce environmental impacts by developing a framework for managing

materials and engaging partners throughout all stages of a material's life cycle. Existing statute also points in this direction in prioritizing waste prevention over reuse and recycling.

To develop the 2050 Vision, DEQ applied The Natural Step approach, which involves "backcasting," starting with a future vision and then looking back to identify the steps needed to achieve it. DEQ convened a workgroup of stakeholders representing businesses, nongovernmental organizations, local governments, state agencies and individuals to participate in the visioning process. The workgroup met for five day-long meetings and provided ideas, opinions and support drafting the document.

**Commission
authority**

The commission has authority under ORS 459A.020 to adopt this proposed update of the statewide integrated solid waste management plan.

Key issues

Taking a full life cycle approach

Shifting from managing wastes to managing materials through the full lifecycle of design, production and use is essential to achieving the 2050 Vision. This represents a significant shift for DEQ and others. Stakeholders generally expressed strong support for state programs and policies to address materials in a more comprehensive manner.

Looking "upstream"

Taking action upstream – in design and production – offers the best opportunities to realize the 2050 Vision, because designers and producers typically have the greatest direct control over the impacts of materials. Consumers also have important roles to play in the types of products they demand, how they use them and how items are managed once they are no longer wanted. The Framework for Action includes a variety of actions Oregon could take to engage designers, producers and consumers. While working with these partners holds the potential for high environmental benefits, DEQ traditionally has less experience in these areas. Developing the competencies and partnerships necessary for success will take time and will require engagement with stakeholders not traditionally involved in DEQ's work.

Improving existing programs

The 2050 Vision describes a state where unwanted materials are diverted to their highest-and-best next use. The Framework for Action calls for an increase in recycling collection opportunities through revisions to Oregon's Opportunity to Recycle laws; expanded recovery of high-value and high-impact materials such as metals, plastic and food waste; limitations on waste disposal and new recovery goals. Many stakeholders expressed support for these advances in Oregon's

approach to managing waste. DEQ expects to continue to work with its partners in local government and the waste industry, with an emphasis on the environmental benefits of waste recovery.

Building this work into DEQ's operations

The Framework for Action identifies a need to establish new goals and outcome measures, realign DEQ resources for effective implementation, reprioritize existing resources and secure new resources as needed. Stakeholders involved in the visioning process acknowledged that these foundational actions are essential to move Oregon toward the 2050 Vision.

Public outreach In addition to an extensive workgroup process, DEQ maintained a weblog and posted information to the project website. DEQ made a draft 2050 Vision and Framework for Action available for public input during July and August 2012. In July, DEQ hosted a public webinar to describe the contents of the document and encourage interested parties to provide input.

DEQ received 21 individual letters from members of the Materials Management Workgroup, local governments, EPA region 10, Washington Department of Ecology, Association of Oregon Recyclers, Recycling Advocates, Oregon Refuse and Recycling Association, materials management businesses, Oregon Environmental Council and the Oregon Sustainability Board.

Next steps If the commission approves this action, DEQ will prioritize and implement short- and long-term actions in coordination with stakeholders.

Attachments A. Materials Management in Oregon: 2050 Vision and Framework for Action

Available online or on request

1. Project website:
<http://www.deq.state.or.us/lq/sw/materialsmgmtplan.htm>
2. Background documents:
<http://www.deq.state.or.us/lq/sw/materialsmgmtplanbkgrddocs.htm>
3. Available on request: Letters of public input.

Approved:

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