Extended Producer Responsibility: Moving toward a Sustainable US Economy

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Presentation:

- What EPR is
- Why it’s needed
- Some of the benefits
- Where we’re at
- Where we could be headed
What is EPR?

- OECD: “An EPR policy is characterized by:

  1. the shifting of responsibility (physically and/or economically; fully or partially) upstream toward the producer and away from municipalities; and

  2. the provision of incentives to producers to take into account environmental considerations when designing their products.”
Why is EPR needed?

Core Problems:

• Design for the “dump”

• “Toxics in, Toxics out”
Disposable and Toxic

By Design
Today’s Linear Waste Management System:

1. Manufacturers
2. Retailers
3. Consumers
4. Recycle & Garbage Bins
5. Local Government Funded
6. Recycling & Landfill Processes
Our current system:

- Rising waste; stagnant recycling rates
- Depletion & wasting of natural resources
- Growing energy & climate change impacts
- Spreading toxic pollution
- Rising taxes; government can’t respond
Rising Waste; Stagnant Recycling

TRASH GENERATION:
• 1960: 2.7 pounds
• 2011: Each American = 4.5 pounds of trash every day

RECYCLING RATES:
• 1990 – 2000: 16% to 29%
• 2000 – 2010: 29% to 34%
What waste looks like today:

Manufactured Goods 75%
Organics & Misc. Inorganics 25%

Packaging
Non-durable Products
Durable Products
Food Scraps
Yard Trimings
Miscellaneous Inorganics

SOURCE: US EPA 2005
Product Waste is Skyrocketing
Depletion of Natural Resources

• 98 tons materials = 1 ton paper
  • 26 million tons landfilled each year

• 17 million barrels of oil = water bottles
  • 4/5 of all water bottles are not recycled

• 5 tons of bauxite + 32 barrels of oil = 1 ton of aluminum
  • 2/3 of all beverage containers are not recycled
Rising Costs; Govt. Can’t Respond
EPR as a Proven Policy Tool

- EPR reduces waste & boosts recycling
- EPR prevents resource depletion
- EPR reduces energy use, pollution & GHG impacts
- EPR reduces taxes and government
- EPR stimulates economic development
Today’s Linear Waste Management System:
Tomorrow’s Cradle-to-Cradle System

Manufacturers → Retailers → Consumers → Take Back Programs

- Materials are recycled into new products
- Take Back Programs: mail-back, collection sites, haulers, local governments
Some examples

- Bottle bill states: 80% recycling rate
  - Non-bottle bill states: 25% average
  - Maine: 1,400 jobs associated
    - Only one FTE government employee

- Maine E-waste Recycling Law: 5 years
  - 32 million lbs. recycled
  - 6 million lbs. of lead/other toxics avoided
  - $20 million in savings to Maine taxpayers
  - GHG savings = 1.1 million barrels of oil

- British Columbia Pharmaceutical Take-back Law
  - 4.5 million people covered through retail pharmacies
  - $400,000 total costs of program
Canada’s EPR Action Plan

Phase 1 (6 years – by 2015)
- Packaging
- Printed materials
- Mercury containing lamps
- Other mercury-containing products
- Electronics and electrical products
- Household hazardous and special wastes
- Automotive products

Phase 2 (8 years – by 2017)
- Construction materials
- Demolition materials
- Furniture
- Textiles and carpet
- Appliances, including ozone-depleting substances (ODS)
Some EU EPR Initiatives

• WEEE Directive – EPR for “anything with a plug or battery.”

• EOL Vehicle Directive – 95% of cars recovered for recycling by 2015

• EU Packaging Directive – many countries recycling 65%-80% of packaging

• EOL Battery Directive
EPR in the US Today: 80+ laws

Source: Product Stewardship Institute, Inc. (2011)
Opportunities

• "Imagine a world in which all the things we make, use, and consume provide nutrition for nature and industry—a world in which growth is good and human activity generates a delightful, restorative ecological footprint."
  – William McDonough

• Cradle to cradle stewardship of materials

• Waste = food
  • “Technical” nutrients are designed to be recycled in perpetuity
  • “Biological” nutrients are separated and composted
Presentation:

- **What EPR is:** manufacturers have “physical and financial responsibility for recycling”

- **Why it’s needed:** addresses “design for the dump” and “toxics in, toxics out”

- **Some of the benefits:** more recycling = less resource depletion = less energy use = less pollution = reduced government/taxes

- **Where we’re at:** more than 80 laws covering 10 product categories in 32 states

- **Where we could be headed:** EPR for most of the waste stream; cradle-to-cradle stewardship of materials