



POLICY STATEMENTS AND RESOLUTION PROCESS GUIDE MICHIGAN RECYCLING COALITION

POLICY STATEMENTS

INTRODUCTION

The Michigan Recycling Coalition (MRC) is a non-profit educational organization, bringing together members from government, institutions, for-profit and non-profit businesses, and citizens with the common goal of promoting sound resource management through source reduction, reuse, recycling and composting in Michigan.

These MRC Policy Statements are really an outline "framework" to highlight those issues area which it feels are important for fostering the changes needed to promote the reduction of solid waste.

MRC members are encouraged to recommend policies which identify specific actions that will effect the needed change as identified in issue area sections of this statement. Those policies which represent the mission and interests of the coalition will be approved by the Board of Directors, and be included with this document.

This document is intended to be a "living" document, which will be reviewed annually, and supplemented or amended to reflect changing conditions in the area of source reduction, reuse, recycling and composting.

Section 1

GENERAL POLICIES

WASTE REDUCTION GOALS & STANDARDS

Source reduction, recycling and composting can be encouraged at the local and state levels through the establishment of national goals. The establishment of national goals will define the importance of waste prevention and recycling for both the public and private sector.

Federal, state and local governments should establish aggressive, achievable source reduction, recycling and composting goals where collection goals and utilization goals are in balance.

State and local governments should be required to annually report their progress in meeting state and federal goals. Definitions of solid waste, municipal solid waste, recyclable, recycled and related terms should be standardized nationally.

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

Education and outreach are required for change that results in rational decisions to increase waste reduction and recycling. Education and outreach information should be developed and made easily accessible to private and public sectors, the media and the general public, including school children.

HIERARCHY OF WASTE MANAGEMENT PREFERENCES

The Michigan Recycling Coalition endorses and supports a hierarchy of waste management preferences that gives first priority to source reduction, reuse, recycling and composting to minimize the amount of waste to be otherwise managed.

Source reduction and recycling can conserve energy and natural resources, create jobs and employment opportunities, and conserve landfill space. Other forms of waste disposal, such as waste-to-energy facilities and sanitary landfilling, are less preferable in terms of resource conservation and environmental protection.

Policies should also be adopted at local, state and federal levels of government to pursue an integrated waste management hierarchy of priorities for solving solid waste problems.

COMPOSTING

Clean, source-separated compostables, such as leaves, grass clippings, brush, food scraps and non-recyclable paper represent a significant portion of the municipal solid waste stream. Composting is a viable strategy, equal in importance with recycling, for achieving effective reduction of the waste stream.

Section 2

MATERIALS END-USE

MARKET DEVELOPMENT

Recycling is only successful, economically and environmentally, to the extent that it replaces rather than augments the use of some virgin resources. We are becoming a supplier of basic raw materials (from recycling) which other economies are processing into much higher-value materials and products, often for consumption back in the U.S. To build a recycling manufacturing base will not only strengthen the demand for recycled materials, but it will also assist in resolving our nation's balance of trade deficits, and will reinvest local waste resources that contribute jobs and taxes to local economies.

Market development programs must be made an integral part of recycling collection initiatives. In promoting markets for recovered materials, economic development, waste management and environmental protection authorities must work with private firms to select, fully fund and implement the most appropriate and cost-effective market development instruments and activities.

ECONOMIC AND REGULATORY POLICIES

The Michigan Recycling Coalition encouraged federal, state and local government to examine economic and regulatory policies to assure that disincentives for the use of recycled materials in the manufacture of products are eliminated and, under appropriate circumstances, incentives for the use of recycled materials are encouraged.

RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT AND TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER

Research, development and transfer of technology is needed within industry, commerce and all levels of government to develop uses for secondary materials as the feedstock of industry. These technologies will result in less dependency on limited and virgin by promoting the use of renewable, reusable and recyclable materials, as well as developing substitute feedstocks of primarily recycled and secondary materials.

Steps should be taken to ensure the continued development of cost effective systems for collection, processing, market development and education to maintain the viability and long-term growth of

recycling. The MRC will support the efforts of those who seek to increase the amount of recycling and who explore and expand new opportunities for source reduction and recycling.

RECYCLED CONTENT PRODUCT STANDARDS

Improvements in the demand for recycled materials will add market certainty to recyclable material collection programs. The expansion of markets, in turn, rest heavily on the use of recycled content products. Thus, measures are needed to expand and encourage the use of recycled content products.

The MRC encourages the highest level of recycled content available in the marketplace for newspapers, packaging and other consumer products. Wherever possible, public and private standards should be revised to allow greater use of recycled and recyclable materials. Product standards which pose impediments on the use of recycled materials should be carefully scrutinized.

PROCUREMENT POLICIES

Federal, state, and local governments should immediately institute recycled products procurement standards that specify minimum recycled and post-consumer recycled content and appropriate price preference for a broad range of products.

The success of recycling depends on manufacturing from recovered materials useful products that reenter the economy.

Local and state governments should review federal and state procurement requirements (e.g., those in RCRA) to determine what additional efforts, if any, are required of them to comply with laws requiring the use of recycled materials and products when using federal and state funding for projects within that government.

The Michigan Recycling Coalition recommends that public and private agencies and organizations establish programs to favor purchases of recycled products and engage in source reduction.

Section 3

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

OPPORTUNITY TO RECYCLE

Continued emphasis on recycling of post-consumer materials—not only in residential waste, but also in waste generated from commercial and industrial sources—is required as a significant part of prudent and environmentally sound solid waste management. To increase the diversion rate of such materials from the solid waste stream will require opportunities for all citizens, businesses and industries to recycle, and adequate markets to use the collected materials. The opportunity to recycle can be provided by private, public and non-profit organizations or partnerships.

COST EFFECTIVE RECYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

As recycling activities are expanded, efforts should be pursued in a way that builds upon the existing recycling infrastructure of markets, processors, collectors, sorters (both private and nonprofit) and the throughput they generate. As the existing infrastructure grows, steps should be taken to ensure cost-effective design of systems and for collection, processing and end-uses to grow in size together.

COST-EFFECTIVE RECYCLING OPERATIONS AND FACILITIES

Source-separated, recyclable and compostable materials diverted from municipal solid waste (MSW) for which recycling markets exist, should not be considered solid waste. Subjecting recycling operations and facilities to unnecessary regulations and permitting requirements will prevent the timely development of recycling/composting infrastructures. The Michigan Recycling Coalition recommends

that recycling/composting operations and facilities be regulated to the extent necessary to protect health and the environment.

ECONOMICS OF RECYCLING

As source reduction, recycling and composting programs are instituted costs of garbage collection and disposal are avoided by the municipality and/or its contractors(s). One of the most challenging aspects of changing local systems to foster recycling will be establishing methods to accrue the avoided collection and disposal costs to the benefit of funding recycling programs.

Avoided collection and disposal costs should be established in a way that provides incentives for waste generators, collectors and landfill operators to expand recycling and encourage the reduction of amounts of waste generated, and that takes into account future increasing waste disposal costs.

Landfill prices should reflect the true cost of disposal to encourage source reduction, recycling and composting, and to encourage waste generators and haulers to keep recyclable materials from other wastes.

Many cities offer unlimited garbage collection service for a flat fee. Once recycling services are offered so that residents can choose to waste or to recycle, a limit to the amount of waste accepted at a base price should have a significant impact on consumer behavior. This base price for garbage service is analogous to the "lifetime" services provided by utilities to provide basic while promoting conservation.

Limited or variable can rates should be considered a critical first step toward a rate structure that discourages waste.

Section 4

PUBLIC AND PRIVATE INITIATIVES

BASIC RECYCLING PRACTICES

A primary goal of the Michigan Recycling Coalition is to reduce waste production and then maximize recycling as an integral part of sound resource management. The MRC has adopted internal organizational waste reduction and recycling practices, and encourages other public and private entities to adopt similar practices appropriate to their situation.

PRODUCT LABELING FOR RECYCLABILITY/RECYCLED CONTENT

Recyclable products and packaging greatly facilitate environmentally sound solid waste management. The success of recycling programs depends on labeling of products and packaging for their recycled material content and their recyclability; allowing consumers to make well-informed, environmentally sound purchasing decisions; and on consumer demand for products and packaging made from recycled materials.

The Michigan Recycling Coalition supports adoption of federal legislation or regulation setting nationally uniform requirements, standards, and definitions to regulate the environmentally marketing and labeling practices for products and packaging for recyclability, reusability and recycled content.

PRODUCT DESIGN

The Michigan Recycling Coalition encourages manufacturers to design products and packaging which promotes waste reduction, reuse, recyclability, and the utilization of post consumer materials in the manufacture of their products.

MRC Policy Resolution Process

An MRC Policy Resolution is a formal statement of a decision, position, or expression of opinion regarding environmental policy in Michigan. Resolution may be general or specific concerning laws, practices, techniques, and theories that may affect the environment, relate to recycling and waste management and support the MRC mission statement.

WHO CAN SUBMIT A RESOLUTION FOR CONSIDERATION?

Any member of good standing in the MRC may submit in writing a proposed MRC policy resolution for consideration.

HOW TO SUBMIT A RESOLUTION:

All proposed resolutions must be submitted in writing to the Policy Committee for review.

Proposed policy resolutions will be reviewed at the next Policy Committee meeting. The Chair of the Policy Committee may call a special meeting or refer directly to the Board of Directors a resolution which may warrant immediate action.

HOW A DECISION IS REACHED:

The Policy Committee may draft language for the proposed resolution. Each draft resolution which receives 2/3 endorsement of the Policy Committee members voting will be submitted to the Board of Directors for consideration. A draft resolution becomes a policy of the MRC when passed by a 2/3 vote of the Board. A resolution that is not approved may be resubmitted to the Policy Committee with additional information. The Policy Committee may also submit white papers for board review.