

Chapter 5

Education and Promotion

This chapter describes the general solid waste management educational activities and programs implemented in Clark County. Specific educational activities and needs are described in some of the individual chapters of the Plan. For example, education and promotion activities specific to waste reduction efforts are described in chapter 4 on *Waste Prevention and Reduction*; education and promotion activities associated with moderate risk waste are described in chapter 11 *Moderate Risk Waste Plan*.

The primary objective of educational programs is to encourage proper solid waste management practices within the County, including waste reduction and toxicity reduction. This is achieved by increasing citizens' knowledge of the local solid waste system and solid waste management options and their costs and benefits; providing information on waste reduction and toxicity reduction methods; encouraging awareness of personal responsibility for the environmental and human health consequences of individual and community actions; and promoting efficient and sustainable use of resources.

Education and promotion campaigns are needed to continually reinforce behaviors and maintain participation levels that will result in successful waste diversion programs and toxics reduction. Ideally, waste reduction and toxics reduction should be addressed concurrently, especially in the residential sector. To be effective, these campaigns should be coordinated on a countywide and regional basis to help ensure consistency. The County and cities need to develop education for residential and non-residential generators of waste as described in chapter 4 "Waste Prevention and Reduction." The County and cities need to conduct a longitudinal survey of residents and businesses to determine what educational media and waste reduction messages are most effective.

Assessment of Conditions

Partnerships

In Clark County, educational activities and programs are carried out by County and its cities, by solid waste and recycling collection and processing companies and by the following coalitions of agencies who pool their financial resources and expertise toward coordinated educational efforts.

- Columbia Springs Environmental Education Center (CSEEC)
- The Master Composter/Recycler Program

- The Naturally Beautiful Backyards Program

As a part of the collection contracts with the County and the City of Vancouver, Waste Connections, Inc. provides five Waste Reduction Coordinators to assist in the overall education and promotional activities and programs.

This section looks first at the activities of each of these coalitions, and then presents an overview of school-based, volunteer-based and non-residential educational activities, as well as an overview of other public information.

Columbia Springs Environmental Education Center

School and Public Outreach Programs

The EIC was established in 1992 as the Environmental Information Center, with the primary objective being to respond to the community's environmental education needs. In 2006, the EIC staff and programs were moved to the Columbia Springs Environmental Education Center (CSEEC). In 2007, all of the EIC programs were incorporated under the CSEEC structure (*and the EIC Board formally disbanded.*) In addition to solid waste management, recycling, waste reduction and toxicity reduction issues, these programs addresses water quality, air quality, habitat protection, resource conservation, energy issues and their interconnectedness.

Master Composter/Recycler Program

The Master Composter/Recycler is operated under a contract with CSEEC. A volunteer-based program, the Master Composter/Recycler Program solicits and trains volunteers who then “pay back” training hours by promoting yard debris and other organic waste reduction practices, as well as overall recycling information, to county residents.

Naturally Beautiful Backyards Program

The Naturally Beautiful Backyards Program, also located at CSEEC, provides adult-based education on natural gardening techniques. This is a volunteer-based program with volunteers drawn from the WSU Master Gardener Program and the Clark County Master Composter/Recycler Program.

School Based Education

Nine school districts in the County currently educate over 75,000 elementary, middle and high school students. Numerous private schools, summer day camps and Battle Ground School's Home Link provide additional opportunities to conduct school-based educational activities.

The State has begun an initiative for environmental education (*E3 Washington*) with the goal of developing a comprehensive statewide environmental education plan that optimizes environmental education for everyone in Washington State. This initiative is designed to optimize environmental education by linking and leveraging current

resources, identifying areas that need improvement and/or development, and gaining increased commitment and funding to ensure success from both private and public entities.

Teacher Training Workshops

Project Learning Tree's 'Municipal Solid Waste', sponsored by the CSEEC, is an interdisciplinary curriculum for the primary grades that enables educators to integrate waste reduction, recycling, toxics reduction, moderate risk waste management, air quality and vermicomposting into math, science, reading and language arts, social studies, economics, fine arts and other subject areas. Training and workshops for middle school/junior high teachers use "EarthSAVERs", a resource conversation curriculum developed by agencies in Clark County for the middle grades. County solid waste staff and Master Composter/Recycler volunteers assist CSEEC staff with the training workshops. In addition to organizing and sponsoring the teacher training workshops, CSEEC has prepared kits containing all the materials and supplies necessary to conduct many classroom activities. The kits may be reserved and checked out from the CSEEC by educators. Programs and curriculums need to be evaluated on a regular basis for effectiveness and to determine if there are more current or better options available.

Classroom presentations

County staff and CSEEC staff also conduct classroom presentations by request, utilizing tabletop models and activities from the curriculum in response to the workshops

Waste Connections Waste Reduction Coordinators also offer classroom presentations in addition to tours of the transfer station.

Efforts need to be made to reach out to alternative schools in the community such as the Washington State Schools for the Deaf and Blind and home school networks.

Assembly presentations

County staff help develop assemblies on waste reduction, recycling and/or hazardous waste upon request. The assembly presentations include: environmental storytelling, Mother Natures Garden puppet show, and Gracie Learns the 3 R's puppet show. A third puppet show is being introduced in 2009.

Student Involvement

County and CSEEC staff also promotes student service learning, such as students setting up recycling programs in their own schools. They also attend school environmental fairs to further promote waste reduction activities.

Secondary Education

Clark College and Washington State University of Vancouver provide opportunities on campus to their students. At these educational institutions, CSEEC and solid waste staff

work with professors from Environment Biology, Natural Resource Conservation, Economics and Masters in Teaching programs to conduct classroom presentations and recruit students for community service projects.

Volunteer-Based Education

In an effort to expand waste reduction education to include more personal or “neighbor-to-neighbor” contact, County and City of Vancouver staff develop partnerships with community organizations whenever possible. Master Composter/Recycler volunteers provide a firm foundation of volunteer outreach. Partnerships with the WSU Master Gardener program provide other opportunities for volunteer outreach. In addition, County and city staff presents slide shows to neighborhood associations and civic groups to encourage them to share information with their peers about waste and toxics reduction topics.

Business Outreach

Technical Assistance to Businesses

County and City staff provide telephone consultation and on-site waste audits for businesses that request assistance to establish or improve their waste reduction and recycling practices. Visits and information involved helping businesses on solid and hazardous waste reduction, commercial recycling and pollution prevention. In 1997, solid waste and recycling outreach to businesses was integrated with the moderate risk waste technical assistance program to more efficiently coordinate both services.

Other Public Information

A wide variety of educational media and outreach approaches have been used in Clark County to ensure ongoing education to support programs in solid waste management, recycling, waste reduction and toxics reduction. The following are some examples of these education and promotion efforts.

Recycling Directory

The County, in conjunction with the cities, produces and updates a “Recycling Directory” which contains extensive information on opportunities for waste reduction, reuse and recycling in Clark County. Information addresses automotive waste, bulky items, construction and building materials, garbage, glass bottles and jars, hazardous waste, metals, paper, plastics, yard debris and other wastes. The directory lists resources for curbside collection services, drop-off sites, business recycling collection services and educational and local government contracts. Copies of the “Recycling Directory” are distributed at community events, including the Clark County Fair, as well as through community centers and local retailers.

Brown Pages

A section of the telephone directory has been dedicated to waste reduction and recycling information so that citizens can access this information available at all times.

Web Site

The Clark County Solid Waste Program website has been updated and can answer questions about hauling service and disposal options for Clark County citizens. It also provides information about waste reduction and programs such as Master Composter/Recycler and Naturally Beautiful Backyards. Program brochures are also available on-line. The cities and Waste Connection, Inc. provide websites with solid waste and recycling information, including collection services and rates.

Waste Stream Analysis

Waste stream analysis data could be used to guide ongoing education programs and new education programs. Waste stream analysis can help determine which specific generator groups and materials require additional attention in education and promotion campaigns.

Events and Promotion

County and city staff and its partners participate in community events and promotion efforts such as Earth Day, Clark Public Utilities Home and Garden Idea Fair, Sturgeon Festival, Watershed Festival, Clark County Fair, America Recycles Day, and Recycled Arts Festival.

Education by Collection Contractors

As with the terms of their contracts, the contracted private service provider also provides education. Waste Connections, Inc. employs five Waste Reduction Coordinators to facilitate various promotion and education activities. These activities include preparing a program information sheet for distribution with curbside recycling containers (bins), maintaining a customer service telephone line and providing ongoing information and education efforts. Similar services are conducted for multi-family residents. The cities of Vancouver, Camas, and Washougal conduct similar public promotion and education efforts, primarily related to curbside recycling services provided in those cities. For example, the City of Vancouver sponsors two "Recyclingist Neighborhood" trainings each year in partnership with Waste Connections, Inc. and Columbia Resource Company. This program trains neighborhood representatives who write an article for their neighborhood newsletter. Neighborhood associations receive a cash award to benefit neighborhood activities and events.

The unincorporated areas of Clark County and the cities of Vancouver, Battle Ground, Ridgefield, La Center, Camas and Washougal have implemented residential curbside recycling programs. These programs offer a focused tool for educating waste generators about waste reduction and recycling opportunities. The distribution of an

annual newsletter, prepared cooperatively by the service provider and local government solid waste staff, to residential recycling customers provides a vehicle to educate each generator. Similar information is regularly provided to multi-family tenants.

As Clark County and the cities and towns implement additional recycling collection programs and expand existing programs, promotional campaigns are donated to educate generators. Ideally, these campaigns begin at least three months before startup of a new program and continue throughout the duration of the program. This advance notice results in better acceptance and an easier transition into the programs. Programs that have offered such opportunities include urban multi-family recycling service, curbside plastics recycling and yard debris collection service.

Educational Materials

Ongoing educational outreach includes the preparation and distribution of general educational materials, describing waste and toxics reduction, recycling methods and proper solid waste management practices. Materials are prepared and distributed through various media outlets.

Recommendations

1. Expand education programs to address the benefits to water, air, soil, fish and other species, which result from solid waste prevention and solid waste management activities with an emphasis being placed on ways to reduce energy consumption and greenhouse gases.
2. Create links for our education programs back to the State of Washington's *Beyond Waste Plan*.
3. Continue contracting or partnering with the service providers, non-governmental agencies and organizations to develop and/or implement some of the technical assistance, information, education and promotion activities; Continue to support and fund the teacher trainings and workshops, Master Composter/Recycler, and the Naturally Beautiful Backyards as programs at Columbia Springs Environmental Education Center as resources to promote waste and toxics reduction, recycling activities and proper management of solid wastes.
4. Continue to build partnerships that encompass regional issues and regional programs and integrate solid waste with related topics, including water quality, public health, water conservation, energy and resource conservation and reduction of greenhouse gases. Develop a regional environmental education plan in participation with the E3 initiative.
5. Continue to use the Environmental Management System (EMS) as a method for evaluating and measuring the effectiveness of education and promotion programs. The EMS should use the results of each waste stream analysis to identify specific materials and generator groups to build ongoing education programs and, potentially, new education programs.

6. Focus educational activities on personal contact, through schools, community events and community groups in balance with general media education.
7. Develop a Green Schools Program with all schools in Clark County participating. All environmental education activities in the classroom should be linked with environmental school events. Other school educational programs delivered by other groups in the community should also be linked to the Green Schools Program.
8. The Green Schools Program should include reduction in the use of chemicals through IPM programs.
9. Structure our school programs so that all students in Clark County schools have at least one waste reduction educational opportunity for each school level (i.e. elementary, middle, and high school).
10. Enhance the County's web site to be more comprehensive with information and be a more interactive interface with users. Areas for research include:
 - a. On-line Recycling A-Z Directory
 - b. Maps with area specific residential service information
 - c. Interactive "What Can I Recycle at the Curb" page
 - d. On-line waste reduction/waste minimization tutorial for the home & office
11. Increase educational efforts for rural and multi-family residences for both recycling and yard waste collection services.
12. Develop an intensive residential educational effort and promotional campaign to coincide with any changes to the collection system and use this opportunity to evaluate social marketing and incentive approaches to increase participation and recovery.
13. Enhance education to businesses so that all businesses are aware of the commercial recycling services that are available; all businesses recycle, have implemented waste reduction programs, and have reduced their use of hazardous or toxic materials.
14. Plan outreach for alternative schools such as the Washington State School for the Deaf, Washington State School for the Blind and Home Link.
15. Evaluate all programs for effectiveness in conjunction with development of annual workplans.
16. Staff should review monthly educational efforts of Waste Connections Recycling Coordinators towards their work authorizations and overall solid waste goals to obtain the maximum potential from this group.