

ECOS Spring Meeting

April 15, 2008

2020 Vision Report

PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND STATUS REPORT

APRIL 2008

Overview

In 2002, a group of state environmental agency and EPA officials developed a new RCRA vision that shifted from traditional waste management to sustainable materials management. Called "*Beyond RCRA, Waste and Materials Management in the Year 2020*," the report established three goals: (1) use resources in sustainable ways; (2) take a life-cycle approach to managing risks; and, (3) practice safe, environmentally sound management for any waste that remains.

A focused state and EPA effort, the 2020 Vision, is now underway, with the goal of creating a blueprint or roadmap to guide states and EPA towards sustainable materials management and the goals of *Beyond RCRA*. Representatives from the states of California, Georgia, Virginia, Washington, and Wisconsin are on the workgroup as well as EPA's Office of Solid Waste, Office of Prevention, Pesticides and Toxic Substances, Office of Policy Economics and Innovation, and Regions 3, 4, and 9.

The first step by the Workgroup has been to conduct a significant analytical effort, examining existing data on the lifecycle impacts of materials and evaluating new tools for sustainably managing materials. Early results are encouraging. This effort will support development of strategies and approaches to focus resources, as we work toward a shift to sustainable materials management.

Why a Roadmap Now?

The goals of the 2002 document remain compelling and sustainable materials management is of great importance. Some progress has already been made in shifting the focus of federal and state waste prevention and management programs towards materials management and sustainability. We see increased focus generally on product stewardship, as well as focus on particular products such as electronics, carpets, and coal combustion products. Additional work is needed to identify paths for complementary actions by the federal government, states, and others, and to provide tools and strategies to set priorities, drive change, and capture lessons learned.

Using a materials flow perspective, the Workgroup is evaluating the actions and steps that could help us reach *Beyond RCRA*. In conducting this evaluation, the Workgroup is considering the changes which have occurred in the last six years, including:

- increased attention to climate and changing energy policy
- growing globalization of the economy
- water scarcity
- population/economic growth
- security implications of materials availability, scarcity and use.

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Phase I: Analysis of Existing Data

The initial focus has been on identifying, compiling, and analyzing existing data about the volumes of materials used and the lifecycle, energy, water, and waste impacts of materials use. The goal of the analysis is to help the Workgroup identify priority materials on the basis of environmental impacts throughout the materials lifecycle and to support a “cradle to cradle” approach to materials policy. The Workgroup feels strongly that this analytical underpinning is critical to:

- > support good choices regarding priority areas and reinforce the need for a materials (not waste) focus;
- > make the case for change where change is needed; and,
- > understanding information currently available about materials and future information needed.

To date, no assumptions have been made about which materials, or related products, services, or sectors might be potential focus areas. To assure breadth, the focus has been on five topic areas: materials extraction, lifecycle impacts, energy impacts, water impacts, and waste impacts. The expectation is that air impacts also will be integrated into the analytical work but has not been a part of the initial focus.

Phase II: Analytic Results and Recommendation Development

When the analysis is complete, the Workgroup will consider the results and identify potential priority materials which could be associated with products, services and/or sectors. So, how can information and experience drive alignment, resource and program decisions?

The Workgroup’s goal is to find practical ways to use information and lessons drawn from experience to drive both dialogue and decision making. The results and identification of potential priorities are fundamental to a comprehensive dialogue that moves beyond end of life product management and involves parties across media boundaries. This work will examine potential priorities in light of government’s capacity and strengths, with a view towards strategies for short-, medium- and long-term actions. The Workgroup products may include some of the below examples:

- > priority materials and perhaps products, services and/or sectors;
 - > need to emphasize actions to impact within the early stages of the materials flow lifecycle;
 - > next steps and focus areas for successful programs and approaches such as, product stewardship, green chemistry, design for the environment;
 - > systems approach – where programs/approaches explicitly avoid transferring risks and impacts from one part of the environment (e.g., landfills) to another (e.g., air);
 - > key partnerships or other relationships;
 - > future information, analytical tools and decision making tools needs – e.g., development of open source information on chemicals so manufacturers and consumers can make more informed decisions; and,
 - > government leading by example.
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Process, Timing & Opportunities for Involvement

The Workgroup has agreed to a consensus process for a final product that is widely accepted and provides environmental results. The blueprint will align efforts by the states and EPA resulting in more efficient and effective efforts. For that reason, the Workgroup is committed to involving key stakeholders throughout the process including EPA staff, and key ASTSWMO and ECOS decision makers.

Planned products and the review schedule are:

- > Draft analysis results spring 2008
- > Draft roadmap late summer 2008.

