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Down in the dumps: Amid revenue dip, Butte facility looking for ways to turn trash into cash

By ROGER H. AYLWORTH - Staff Writer

Posted: 06/13/2010 09:53:41 PM PDT

OROVILLE -- As governments struggle to get by on ever-tightening budgets, one Butte County agency is looking into raising additional revenues through a range of commercial enterprises.

The Neal Road Recycling and Waste Facility may become the center of a wide range of mostly energy-related initiatives, all aimed at turning trash into cash.

Recently Bill Mannel, who directs Butte County's solid waste program, told the Board of Supervisors the successful effort to promote recycling has had a negative side for his operation.

Since the 2006-2007 fiscal year, the amount of stuff that has gone into the facility formerly known as a landfill has dropped significantly.

In 2006-2007, 179,043 tons of refuse was taken to Neal Road. For the current fiscal year, Mannel projects 136,000 tons of material will be dumped there.

Since the "gate fee" — the cost of dumping something at the Neal Road facility — is charged by the ton, success in reducing the amount of material going into the waste stream translates into a reduction in revenue.

In fiscal year 2006-2007, the gate fees, which then

stood at \$30 a ton, produced \$5.8 million, funding the entire operation, covering some capital projects and allowing equipment replacement on a schedule.

This fiscal year the gate fee is \$37 a ton, and the revenue is expected to come to about \$5.2 million.

With the county already strapped for cash, Mannel told the board the Neal Road facility is looking into other ways to

make money.

By next spring, the facility is expected to get into the renewable energy field, when a company called Ameresco Energy is supposed to begin using "landfill gas" — methane — to power an electric generator.

The next project up for discussion is "bioreactor technology."

Mannel explained that in this process, liquid is introduced into the sealed "waste cells" in the landfill. The addition of the liquid improves the production of methane up to five times more than the unaugmented process.

As a secondary benefit, the faster decomposition that produces the additional gas also reduces the total mass of the material in the landfill.

Mannel said studies done elsewhere show a 15 percent to 30 percent increase in landfill capacity with this approach.

Another aspect of the landfill is that it has lots of space and few residential neighbors to annoy. Mannel said the facility could be well-suited to produce either solar- or wind-generated energy.

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Elsewhere, landfills have been experimenting with flexible solar panels that can be placed over the top of closed landfill modules, and the same thing can be done with wind turbines.

Mannel said solar power could potentially produce 120 kilowatts of power per acre.

The wind turbines will begin to produce power with 8 mph winds. A weather station erected at the landfill last October has shown average daily wind speeds of 10 to 12 mph.

A different approach that currently is not allowed at landfills could take a page out of sewage treatment plants. Mike Crump, director of the county Department of Public Works, said sewage plants routinely place sewage solids and effluent into sealed tanks, where specific microbes are introduced. In an atmosphere devoid of oxygen, the microbes break down the solids and in the process produce methane gas.

Crump said many such plants use the gas to run an electric generator to provide the power to run the entire operation.

A similar process could be done at the Neal Road facility using yard waste and other organic matter, combined with the sewage and associated liquids that are currently placed in dehydration ponds there.

A final approach would involve essentially mining the older sections of the landfill, where recyclable metals and other items could be taken out of the ground. The remaining organic material could be used in one of the gas-production methods.

When the methane is all generated, what remains is something Crump calls "inert organic material," which could be used to cover the landfill the way soil is used today.

Crump said the goal of each of these approaches is to find a way to create additional revenue for the county and reduce the mass of material in the landfill to extend its life.

Staff writer Roger H. Aylworth at 896-7762 or raylworth@chicoer.com.

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New company offers recycling service to residents

By **Jamie Gentner**

Daily News

Posted Mar 29, 2010 @ 09:25 AM

Last update Mar 29, 2010 @ 09:29 AM

Lake Shastina, Calif. — One man and his friends and family are making it easy for Lake Shastina residents' recycling way out of the house.

Jason Robinson began laying the foundation for his recycling company, Wayout Recycling, about a year ago. His un Shastina, and the two men began talking one day.

His uncle, James Person, is from Grass Valley, and Robinson lived in the Los Angeles area for a while. In both place, recounted, recycling was made relatively easy. While recyclables could be put out in bins, residents often had to sep themselves, pay a fee for pick-up and never saw where that money went.

In a rural county, recycling isn't so easy, Robinson said.

Aside from Yreka Transfer Recycling, recycling companies are few and far between. Several, like one in Dunsmuir, t program and then fail because not enough community residents get involved.

The few waste transfer stations in the county don't always take all recyclables, at least not ones that don't have a CR So, Robinson wants to make things easier, starting with Lake Shastina.

He didn't pass his first flier out until about three months ago, but he said it was important to take his time.

"I wanted to make sure I had all my ducks in a row," he said. "I want to get out there and make sure I can do what I p What he is promising is a free recycling service that gives back to its community as long as its community supports t Only three weeks into service, 10 houses are already taking advantage of Robinson's offerings. On the first and third month, residents who put their recyclables out will have them picked up. No need to separate the materials – he'll te And whether the items are in a bag, bin or box, they'll get taken.

Right now, with so few houses participating, proceeds from the recyclables are paying for the gas, advertising and b collections.

"Right now, everything is going back into the company," he said. "I'm not funded. I'm doing it for the Earth and for : trying to find more responsibility in people up here and get everyone together."

Eventually, when the program has grown, Robinson's plan is to put the money back into the community, by sponsor helping with a project or supporting entities such as schools in and around Lake Shastina. If community residents e for bins, the proceeds from the items could also be used to purchase those.

"I'm looking for community support so I can put the money back into the community," Robinson said. "Hopefully it something that makes the community better, that makes the community tighter."

Wayout Recycling is only being offered to residents on Tony Lima, Hogan Loop, Palmer between Tony Lima and Hc Lakeshore between Palmer and Tony Lima.

Only plastic and aluminum is being gathered right now. Without vehicles that have the capacity for things like glass, newspaper that take up more room, Robinson has to start off slow.

But if community members start expressing interest and participating in the program, Robinson said he can expand of the community – or possibly provide one central drop-off location – and collect more recyclable items. If the com successful, Robinson said he could see expanding into other cities, as well.

"I want to see the momentum," he said. "If the community supports the program, I can phase it in quicker. ... I want be proactive about making a change in their community."

Robinson can be contacted at 938-9967 or wayoutrecycling@yahoo.com.

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Comments (0)



Fact Sheet

Recycling the Hard Stuff

“This is a new-to-the-world industry with huge energy savings. Recycling plastics uses only roughly 10 percent of the energy that it takes to make a pound of plastic from virgin materials.”

Dr. Mike Biddle
President
MBA Polymers

Of the estimated 22.4 million tons of plastics produced in the United States in 1998, only about 5.4 percent were recovered for recycling. Plastics used in durable goods (such as cars, electronics, and appliances) account for the largest proportion by weight of plastics in U.S. municipal solid waste (MSW). However, the mixed waste streams characteristic of these harder, engineered plastics are difficult to separate and, thus, complex to recycle. New separation technologies could increase recycling rates for plastics significantly.

Separating Plastics

The technical difficulties and high cost associated with separating plastics have limited recycling in the past. Post-consumer products often contain as many as 20 different types of plastic materials as well as non-plastic materials such as wood, rubber, glass, and fibers. In addition, the dynamic nature of the plastics business produces a steady stream of new products and pigment types, which can pose a challenge to the recycling infrastructure. Consequently, the cost of producing virgin materials is often less than the cost of collecting and processing post-consumer plastics. Three new separation technologies, developed by MBA Polymers, Argonne National Laboratory, and Recovery Plastics International (RPI), could break down these barriers and increase plastics recycling.

Automated Separation

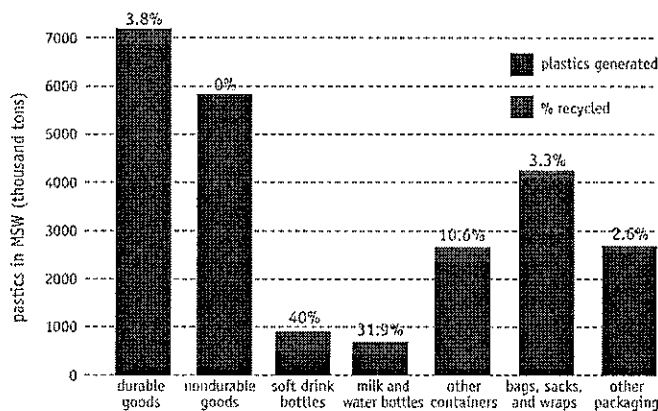
MBA Polymers, with early financial support from the American Plastics Council, U.S. Department of Energy NICE³ program, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Commerce (NIST ATP), State of California CalTIPP, and Vehicle Recycling Partnership, developed a process in which plastic scraps from computers

and other electronics are first ground into small pieces. Magnets and eddy-current separators then extract ferrous and non-ferrous metals. Paper and other lighter materials are removed with jets of air. Finally, a proprietary sorting, cleaning, and testing process involving various technologies, enables the company to separate different types of plastics and compound them into pelletized products comparable to virgin plastics.

Froth Flotation

Argonne National Laboratory (ANL), with support from the U.S. Department of Energy, developed a process to separate acrylonitrile-butadiene styrene (ABS) and high-impact polystyrene (HIPS)—two common forms of plastics—from recovered automobiles and appliances. The froth flotation process separates two or more equivalent-density plastics by modifying the effective density

Plastics in Products in MSW (1999)



of the plastics. The key to this technology is carefully controlling the chemistry of the aqueous solution—the “froth”—so that small gas bubbles attach to the material’s surface and enable the plastic to float to the top.

Skin Flotation

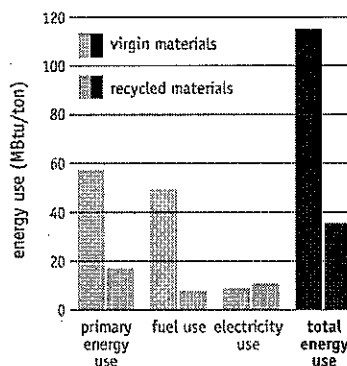
Recovery Plastics International (RPI) has developed an automated process capable of recovering up to 80 percent of the plastics found in automobile shredder residue (ASR). RPI predicts that its new skin flotation technology could divert approximately one-third of the estimated 7 million tons of ASR disposed of each year. The process begins with the separation of light lint materials, followed by the removal of rocks and metals, granulation, washing, and, finally, automated “skin flotation” separation. This final step adds a skin of plasticizer to make the surface of the targeted plastic hydrophobic. Air bubbles then can attach to the plastic, allowing it to float above denser, uncoated pieces.

Benefits

Plastics recovery, in addition to increased diversion from disposal, results in significant energy savings (an estimated 50-75 MBtu/ton of material recycled) compared with the production of virgin materials. Reducing energy use, in turn, leads to reductions in greenhouse gas emissions due to avoided fuel use.

Limiting the plastics that enter landfills can lower the costs associated with waste disposal by reducing tipping fees. In addition, plastics recyclers expect to sell recycled plastic pellets for as much as 70

Projected Energy Savings



percent of the typical price for virgin plastics. Recyclers will profit from selling their product, while purchasers will benefit from the reduced price of recycled plastic.

Challenges

MBA Polymers has been fully commercial for more than a year. Ironically, one of the greatest barriers to operational expansion is the lack of available material. Computer recyclers increasingly find it cheaper to export intact units rather than dismantle the units in the United States. The market demand for recycled plastic resin is clearly growing, but the difficulty is collecting the material and getting it to the recyclers economically. A more developed infrastructure is needed to provide separators with a constant stream of source material.

The other separation technologies are still largely pre-commercial. The next step for these emerging technologies is to conduct pilot studies and establish permanent facilities.

The economic viability of these separation technologies is still largely speculative, but projections made by Argonne National Laboratory and Recovery Plastics International indi-

cate that processing recycled plastics will cost the same or less than manufacturing plastics from virgin materials. Operation costs for processing recycled plastics are estimated in the range of 10-20 cents per pound, which should make recycled plastic resin competitive with costs for existing virgin plastics.

Initial capital costs can be prohibitive, but the payback period is relatively short. RPI estimates that the initial capital cost to install a commercial-size plastics recycling facility (capable of producing 20 million pounds per year) ranges from \$2-5 million and has a typical payback period of one to three years. The two other separators estimate two-year paybacks for capital costs.

Additional Information

American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy (ACEEE)
<http://www.aceee.org/>

MBA Polymers
 Dr. Mike Biddle
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<http://www.mbapolymers.com/>

Argonne National Laboratory
<http://www.anl.gov/>

Recovery Plastics International
 Ronald Kobler
 rpislc@efortress.com

EPA’s Climate and Waste Program increases awareness of climate change and its link to waste management in order to (1) make greenhouse gas emissions a factor in waste management decisions and (2) employ waste management as a mitigation action for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. For additional information on EPA’s Climate and Waste Program, see www.epa.gov/mswclimate.



WASTE & RECYCLING NEWS

Company asks consumers to recycle old toothbrushes

July 20 -- Preserve, which makes household products from recycled materials, has launching a new campaign to allow customers to mail back their toothbrushes for recycling.

The initiative is being launched with the help of consultancy firm Continuum, which helped Preserve roll out its "Gimme 5" #5 plastics recycling campaign at Whole Foods markets and other retailers.

In addition to the mail-back option for the toothbrushes, the product packaging was made lighter and now doubles as a mail back container when consumers are done with the toothbrush. Preserve recycles the toothbrushes into plastic building materials.

For more information on the company, which are available in grocery and natural food stores and retailers Whole Foods Market and Target, visit www.preserveproducts.com.

Contact Waste & Recycling News reporter Amanda Smith-Teutsch at 330-865-6166 or asmith-teutsch@crain.com

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Our Process
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Plastic Recycling Process

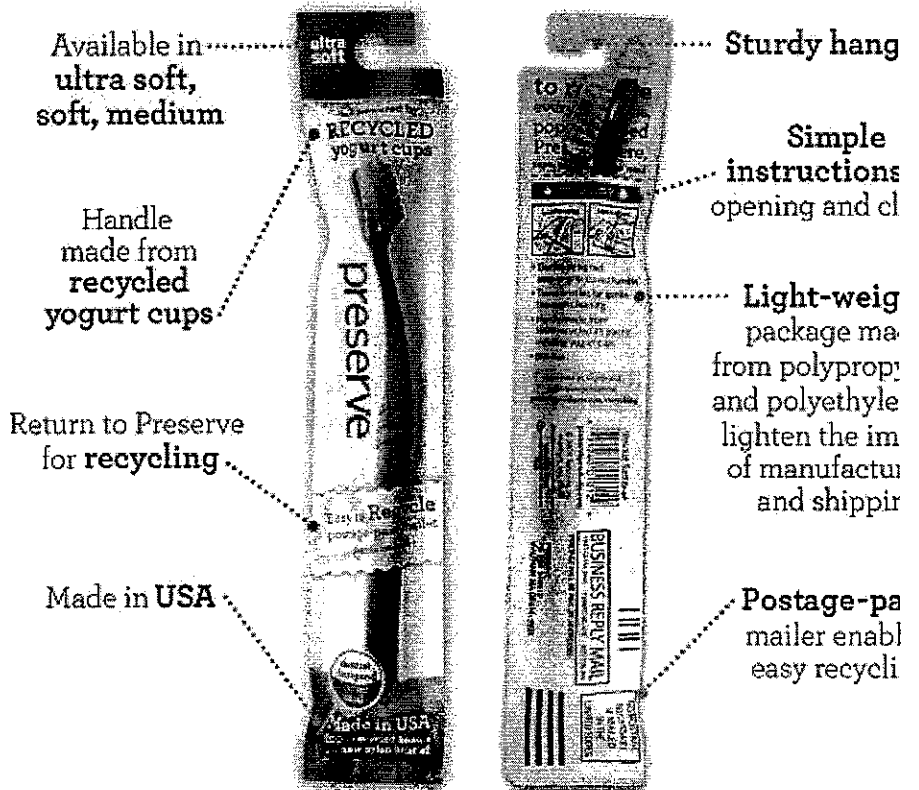
A Revolutionary Approach to Packaging Preserve® Toothbrush Mail-Back Pack

Finally, a package that does more than just hang out. This one does some heavy lifting.

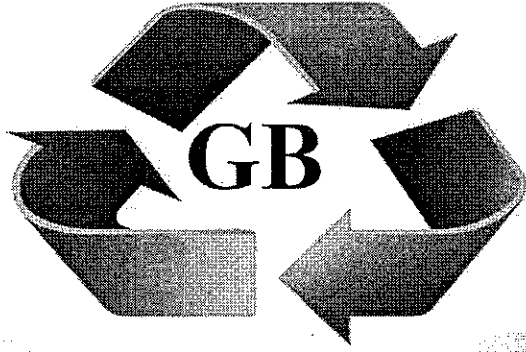
Preserve's new Mail-Back Pack is the first of its kind. The package protects your toothbrush until it gets home. And the package has a double life as a mailer to allow you to send it back to us for recycling.

Our toothbrush handle has been made out of recycled yogurt cups (and other recycled, BPA free plastic) and has been fully recyclable since 1997. We designed the Mail Back Pack to inspire people to recycle their Preserve Toothbrushes—and to make the process even easier.

The postage on the first 250,000 Mail Back Packs sold is on us! After that, all you'll have to do is add a first class stamp on the package and send it back to us for recycling.



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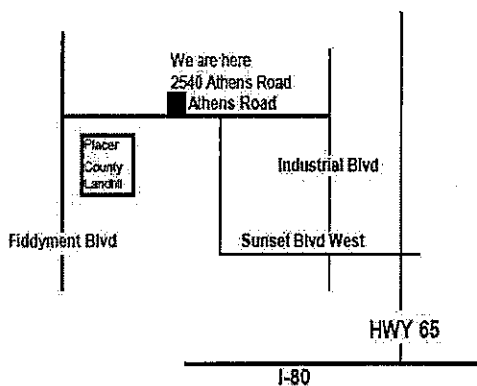
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Del. composting facility employs 'dogged' tactics

By Amanda Smith-Teutsch

There are many people employees at the Wilmington Organics Recycling Center, Peninsula Composting Group's Wilmington, Del., facility. But none of them can quite measure up to Cooper in terms of popularity and affection.

"We have several tour groups come through every week," said Nelson Widell, marketing and sales director, who co-founded the company with managing director Charles Gifford. "Everyone wants to stop at Cooper's area and hear his story. Then he comes running up and licks your face."

Cooper, a young, outgoing border collie, was imported from Toronto and specially trained to keep seagulls away from the composting facility.

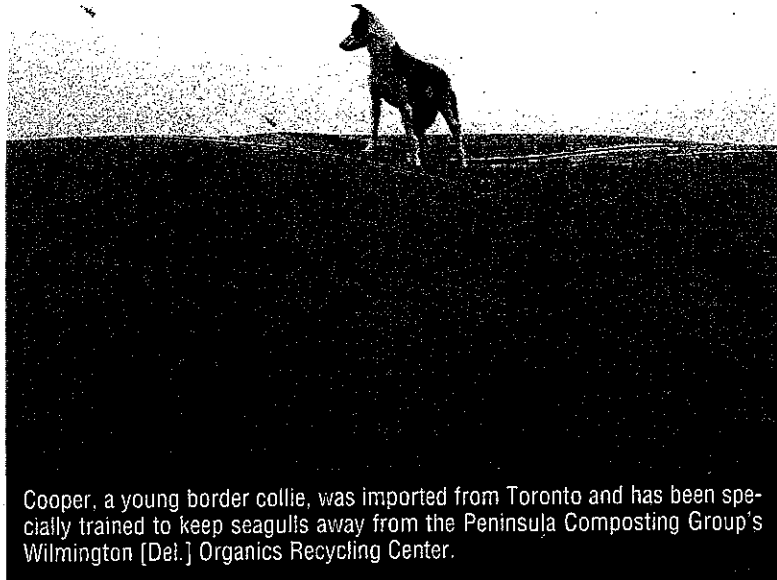
"It was a natural solution to a natural problem," Widell said.

The composting facility, which accepts food waste for recycling in an enclosed building and then sends processed waste outside in Gore fabric covered windrows, is located about a mile — as the gull flies — from Delaware's Cherry Island Landfill.

"Seagulls have lived at the landfill for generations," Widell said. "But even though we sort the food waste inside and the windrows are covered, they somehow knew we had food here."

In a matter of weeks, the newly opened composter was invaded by thousands of seagulls. They perched on the Gore fabric windrows, in the parking lot, and on the buildings, making a nuisance of themselves and leaving droppings everywhere.

The company began casting about for ideas to drive the birds away. There are several products and systems on the market purported to drive away feathered pests. Companies advertise acoustic cannons; balloons with large eyes painted on them that are supposed to give smaller



Cooper, a young border collie, was imported from Toronto and has been specially trained to keep seagulls away from the Peninsula Composting Group's Wilmington [Del.] Organics Recycling Center.

birds second thoughts about swooping in; gunlike products called "avian dissuaders"; and chemicals that can be sprayed on grasses.

In Wilmington, they first tried large model screech owls, having been told no seagull will linger near one.

The fake owls came down a few days later, covered in droppings.

Desperate, they began investigating more exotic measures: a trained peregrine falcon or two, a model airplane, recordings of a severely distressed seagull ("I think it was being killed on the tape," Widell said).

But there's an hourly charge for trained falcons and falconers, and model airplanes can't be flown in the rain. The recording was rejected as laughable. Then Widell remembered a story he'd read about border collies being trained to chase geese away from golf courses and public parks.

"I thought, why not seagulls?" he said.

A breeder and trainer of working collies was found in Toronto. In March, Cooper and his trainer arrived. He immediately went to work, a barking blur of brown and white.

"He just started running like the devil," Widell said. In two days, the thousands of seagulls decided the composting facility wasn't such a great roost after all and the invasion was over.

The company spent about \$7,500 purchasing and importing the dog, building him an indoor-outdoor living area, and installing an underground electrical fence. One of the company's vice presidents keeps track of the canine's veterinary schedule, and Cooper has all the kibble he can eat.

"All in all, it's the best money we've spent," Widell said. "The birds are gone, and there's all sorts of other benefits."

Cooper is lovable and loving, and workers have signed up on a waiting list to take him home for the weekends. He supervises employees when they're checking oxygen levels in the plant's composting windrows and chases the water truck as it cleans the facility several times a day.

"He's become a great mascot," said Widell. ■

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WASTE & RECYCLING NEWS

Federal judge dismisses suit against N.Y.'s e-waste law

June 29 -- A federal court judge in Manhattan has dismissed a lawsuit against the city of New York's controversial e-waste recycling and collection law.

Several electronics and e-waste management companies protested the city's 2008 law, saying it was too restrictive and placed an unfair burden on electronics producers. City workers unions protested the law as well, saying it placed jobs required to be performed by certain city workers in the private sector.

The issue was moot, the judge declared, when New York Gov. David Paterson signed the new state-wide electronic waste recycling law May 28. That new law preempted all county, local and city laws.

The state law establishes a producer responsibility system for end-of-life electronics and allows more flexibility, manufacturers say, in meeting recycling and collection requirements.

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WASTE & RECYCLING NEWS

Bill aims to increase pharmaceutical take back programs

Aug. 4 -- A new bill that has passed the Senate takes aim at increasing pharmaceutical take backs by local jurisdictions.

The law, which would amend existing federal policy, will allow increased take back programs for controlled substance medications that would normally require structured Drug Enforcement Administration approval. Under current law, certain controlled substances must be delivered to the DEA by patients authorized to use them.

The proposed law notes many state and local collection programs are hampered by these rules.

Faced with no other options, many consumers flush narcotics down drains and toilets or discarding the medications, the law states, and disposal also presents a challenge for long-term care facilities that handle large volumes of controlled drugs.

The bill will give the Attorney General the authority to promote new regulations to allow patients to deliver unused drugs and controlled substances that would normally require DEA approval to "appropriate entities for disposal in a safe and effective manner."

The law would provide, in the event of a death, that anyone normally allowed to dispose of the dead person's property also can dispose of their medications. Long term care facilities are also permitted to dispose of the drugs on their residents' behalf.

The act, the "Secure and Responsible Drug Disposal Act of 2010," aims at reducing the abuse of leftover prescription drugs by teenagers, and at reducing violent and property crime caused by and related to the abuse and illegal trade of controlled prescription drugs.

Contact Waste & Recycling News reporter Amanda Smith-Teutsch at 330-865-6166 or asmith-teutsch@crain.com

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WASTE & RECYCLING NEWS

Appliance maker to use plastic recovered from ocean

June 28 -- International home appliance maker Electrolux has announced plans to make a limited number of vacuum cleaners from plastic recovered from the ocean as part of an effort to raise recycling awareness.

"Plastic is a material with many advantages. But when plastic ends up in the wrong place it becomes a problem. To raise public awareness about this issue, Electrolux aims to gather plastic debris from vulnerable marine habitats -- and produce a limited number of vacs out of it," Hans Stråberg, president and CEO of Electrolux, states in a message on the company's website.

Plastic debris is known to concentrate in five oceanic gyres, where plastic debris that washes off of shorelines and ships collects and is battered down into tiny particles. Researchers have found evidence of chemicals found in plastic compounds in fish caught in these areas; algae and plankton activity in these gyres are often decreased, and larger concentrations of plastic debris can pose entrapment hazards to wildlife, researchers say. The most famous gyre, the Pacific Garbage Patch, is estimated to cover an area equal in size to Texas.

For more information on the company, visit www.electrolux.com.

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WASTE & RECYCLING NEWS

Ore. DEQ approves plan for paint product stewardship

July 1 -- In what is being hailed as the first program of its kind in the U.S., the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality has approved a plan for a paint product stewardship program that allows consumers to return unused paint to participating retailers and other sites for disposal.

The pilot program is expected to collect as much as 600,000 gallons of leftover paint annually in Oregon.

The new program, authorized by state law in 2009, will tap into the a national agreement organized by the Product Stewardship Institute Inc., which brought together paint manufacturers, retailers, contractors, recyclers and government officials to develop an environmentally sound and economically efficient solution to deal with leftover paint.

Oregon's PaintCare program begins today and is funded in part by a surcharge on paint and stain.

DEQ Director Dick Pedersen heralded the program as "another indication that Oregon is a leader in implementing the concept of product stewardship as a means of better managing the products manufactured and used."

The American Coatings Association, a trade organization for paint manufacturers, created the non-profit organization PaintCare to administer the program. The program will provide a number of locations where consumers can leave unused paint.

"Getting this law passed took a tremendous amount of cooperation from industry, government, and other stakeholders, and it is exciting to see all the hard work finally pay off," said Scott Cassel, Executive Director of the Product Stewardship Institute. "Oregon DEQ had clear goals in mind and persistently worked with the paint industry to develop a viable plan."

For more information, visit www.deq.state.or.us/lq/sw/prodstewardship/paint.htm.

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WASTE & RECYCLING NEWS

Foundation finds taxes on retail bags fall short on goals

May 13 -- Taxes on one-time use bags at retail and grocery stores fall short of meeting their environmental goals, according to the Tax Foundation.

The Tax Foundation, a nonpartisan, nonprofit founded in 1937, released the report this week, claiming taxes and fees on single-use bags often don't generate enough revenue to support the environmental goals described when the taxes are put in place.

"The environmental benefits of the tax are often exaggerated and the tax becomes another general revenue grab by public officials," the foundation asserts in a press release.

The foundation points to bag tax in Washington, D.C., where officials proposed transferring revenues from the tax collection into the general fund instead of into environmental projects, the foundation said.

"If designed as a pigouvian tax -- meant to eliminate a bad side effect (in this case litter and other environmental problems) -- a bag tax may be considered successful if it achieves some environmental goals while still leaving bags affordable for the people who need them most. But the environmental goals set forth by public officials are often too ambitious to be achieved by a bag tax alone," according to the foundation.

To read the report, visit <http://www.taxfoundation.org/publications/show/26285.html>.

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WASTE & RECYCLING NEWS

Calif. uses ARRA funds for 25 solar-powered compactors

July 6 -- The City of Riverside, Calif., will soon boast 25 public solar-powered trash and recycling compactors, thanks to funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

The compactors will save the city 1,665 gallons of fuel each week as collection needs will decrease. The containers will compact up to 200 gallons of trash or recyclables into 40 to 60 pounds.

Installation of the containers, which include backup battery power, has begun with the first units installed in the Riverwalk area of the city.

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WASTE & RECYCLING NEWS

New organization focuses on cradle-to-cradle principles

May 24 -- A new non-profit organization founded on cradle-to-cradle principles has been launched in California.

To be headquartered in San Francisco, the Green Products Innovation Institute will give C2C certification to manufacturers who demonstrate environmental leadership and sustainability practices in their products.

The certification looks at material health, material re-utilization, renewable energy use, water stewardship and social responsibility during the creation of products.

"Rather than focusing on how industry can become "less bad," the Institute is set up to be a resource for those who aspire to be "more good" and achieve new levels of environmental and human health and safety for all products sold in California," according to GPII's website.

The organization was given the certification mark and C2C protocols by the MBDC, (McDonough, Braungart Design Chemistry), a consultancy organization. Since MBDC introduced the C2C framework in 2005, more than 300 products and 90 companies have engaged in the C2C certification process, including Herman Miller, Shaw Industries, Method, Ford Motor Company and Aveda.

For more information, visit <http://gpinnovation.org/>

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WASTE & RECYCLING NEWS

WM launches new curbside service for CFLs in Calif., Fla.

July 7 -- Waste Management has launched a new curbside recycling service for compact fluorescent lamps.

The new service will roll out first in Rolling Hills Estates, Calif., and in the Florida communities of Melbourne, Palm Bay City and Brevard County.

Residents will receive a specially designed container that can safely store up to 12 standard CFLs. When the bag is full, residents will call Waste Management to collect the container through their current curbside pickup service.

"We are always exploring innovative solutions to help our customers integrate recycling into their daily lives," said Rick Cochrane, senior director of WM LampTracker at Waste Management. "We are looking to implement this curbside CFL service in communities across the country where we provide residential recycling to complement our other residential services while helping residents adopt the use of energy-saving CFLs."

In many states it is illegal to dispose of CFLs in landfills as they contain mercury. Some retailers offer residential takeback programs, and Waste Management also offers a mail-in service through its website, ThinkGreenFromHome.com.

WM LampTracker, a division of Waste Management, also provides services for the storage, handling, transport and recycling of fluorescent lamps for small, medium and large-scale businesses in North America.

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