

## *New Yorkers for Zero Waste Platform 2010*

The N.Y.S. Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) has prepared a new State Solid Waste Plan that finally recognizes that materials in our waste stream are valuable and need to be preserved. We strongly endorse its preference for waste reduction, reuse, recycling and composting over disposal. The less waste we dispose of the more environmental, economic and social benefits that we will enjoy.

Unfortunately millions of tons of garbage are still being wasted by being sent for disposal in landfills or incinerators. The DEC estimates New York's recycling rate to be only 20%, far short of the 50% reduction and recycling goal to be met by 1997 under the State Solid Waste Management Act of 1988. A large portion of waste headed for disposal is recyclable (50%) or compostable (30%) material that could be processed by other means into new products.

To achieve the Plan goals we must stop trashing our resources through disposal!

- Incinerators emit toxic air emissions and produce toxic incinerator ash that needs landfilling. They also emit more CO<sub>2</sub> than coal burning plants per MWh. Incinerators must have burnable materials and therefore compete with recycling.
- Recycling saves 4-5 times the energy an incinerator recovers.<sup>1</sup> Incineration is not renewable energy.

To address climate change we must address waste in our society!

- For every trash bag we put at the curb, 70 bags of trash were generated by industry to make the products we buy. The production of products and packaging is associated with 44% of all greenhouse gas emissions.<sup>2</sup>
- Biodegradable materials in landfills emit methane, a gas that has 72 times the global warming potential of CO<sub>2</sub>, over 20 years.<sup>3</sup> Landfill gas collection systems capture only about 20% of landfill gas.<sup>4</sup>
- The best strategy is to divert biodegradable organic material away from landfills and incinerators to composting. Compost provides nutrients for healthy soils and plants.

Burning and burying garbage wastes money, energy, and natural resources; it contributes to climate change and places an unfair pollution and health burden on nearby communities. Diversion saves energy and resources, and creates many more jobs in collection, processing, reuse of goods and remanufacturing of materials.

Maximizing waste reduction and diversion will dramatically decrease waste sent for disposal over time by 70%, 80%, 90% and more, enabling New York to achieve the significant benefits of a more sustainable system. The ultimate goal should be Zero Waste being sent to Disposal or very close to it.

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<sup>1</sup> EPA's WARM Model.

<sup>2</sup> A recent EPA report found that non-food products are associated with 37 percent of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions. Joshua Stolaroff, PhD worked on the EPA report and subsequently extended the analysis to include products produced abroad and consumed in the US. This white paper states total GHG emissions of products and packaging is 44%. Both reports can be accessed at [www.productpolicy.org](http://www.productpolicy.org)

<sup>3</sup> IPCC, 4th Assessment Report.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., Working Group III, Mitigation, 10.4.2.

**We call on the Governor, the NYS DEC and State Legislators to support a new sustainable direction for reducing waste, recovering resources and growing jobs as well as obtaining other benefits for New Yorkers by doing the following:**

- Establish a moratorium on all new waste incinerators or combustors and expansions. This would include newer thermal technologies that are as yet unproven commercially in the US such as gasification, pyrolysis and plasma arc.
- Ban waste haulers and municipalities from sending recyclable materials for disposal, and instead require recyclables to be source separated and transported to recycling processing facilities.
- Halt all increases in capacity at the state's largest landfills.
- Require all local solid waste planning units and haulers sending garbage for disposal to demonstrate the presence of adequate programs of waste reduction, recycling and composting in the service area.
- Rapidly implement organics collection programs and develop the needed composting and anaerobic digestion infrastructure. Ban yard trimmings from disposal now and enforce. Establish a statewide ban on the disposal of food scraps by 2013.
- Require all communities to adopt incentive/disincentive programs, such as Pay-As-You-Throw, which are proven to increase diversion rates.
- Adopt Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) legislation (also known as product stewardship) to engage manufacturers and importers in the design of products and packaging to reduce waste and toxicity and remove the burden from government and taxpayers. Producers of products and packaging must be part of the solution. 10-15% of the waste stream should be reduced through EPR measures.
- Regulate solid waste generated by all sectors – residential, commercial, institutional and industrial. Bring waste haulers and transporters under the jurisdiction of the DEC through licensing, requiring reporting of all waste and recyclable collections and disposal, and providing for oversight and compliance.
- Require local solid waste planning units to prepare plans that increase waste reduction and diversion and decrease disposal. State and local plans must decrease disposal by 50% by 2015, and 85% by 2020 for all waste streams . The implementation plans must be enforceable by DEC.
- Ensure accurate measurements of diversion and waste quantities in order to measure progress toward goals. Plan to reassess goals and progress and adjust programs under a revised 2020 statewide plan.
- Ensure that Zero Waste Programs and their greenhouse gas benefits become a substantial part of the new state Climate Action Plan and its implementation.
- Establish a secure funding stream to fund more sustainable solid waste programs over the long term and achieve job benefits and needed greenhouse gas emission reductions. Licensing fees, facility permit fees and surcharges on disposal should all be used to provide dedicated funding. A surcharge of at least \$20 per ton of MSW generated could provide \$5 per ton to the state for solid waste activities and \$15 to local planning units to support needed recycling and composting facilities as well as educational programs.

***To support this platform or for more information, contact: Barbara Warren, NY Zero Waste Alliance, project of Citizens Environmental Coalition, [warrenba@msn.com](mailto:warrenba@msn.com) or 845-754-7951/ 518-462-5527.***

## Organizational Supporters

Listed Below

### New York Statewide Organizations

Citizens' Environmental Coalition  
Environmental Advocates of New York  
New York Public Interest Research Group  
Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter

### Local and Regional Organizations

Concerned Citizens of Seneca County, Inc.  
Concerned Citizens of Cattaraugus County  
Finger Lakes Citizen's for the Environment  
Finger Lakes Zero Waste Coalition, Inc.  
Greenwich Citizens Committee, Inc.  
Jamesville Positive Action Committee  
[People's Environmental Network of NY](#)  
Residents For the Preservation of Lowman and Chemung (RFPLC, Inc)  
[Save The Pine Bush](#)  
[Selkirk, Coeymans, Ravena Against Pollution \(SCRAP\)](#)  
Sure We Can  
Sustainable South Bronx  
The Solidarity Committee of the Capital District

### National

American Environmental Health Studies Project  
Center for Health, Environment & Justice  
Institute for Local Self-Reliance