

Product Stewardship - The New Frontier in Waste Management
January 9, 2008 Sacramento Speech
of Rohnert Park Councilmember Tim Smith

Thank you, it is an honor to be speaking with you today. I first want to acknowledge Lisa Steinman, a Waste Management Specialist with the Sonoma County Waste Management Agency, who provided data that was used in the preparation of my comments. She's promised that the Agency website - www.recyclenow.org - will be updated to include that data for anyone interested in taking a look.

It is not my intent to go over in detail the "dollars and cents, pounds and feet" numbers with you. Suffice it to say that the very real monetary costs to our Agency are tens of thousands of dollars for items such as bulbs and batteries; dollars that our ratepayers and taxpayers assume because Product Stewardship is still "The New Frontier in Waste Management" rather than adopted policy in California.

The very fact that I have the honor to speaking with you today exemplifies this situation. I am a Rohnert Park City Councilmember and Vice Chair of the Sonoma County Waste Management Agency. I aspire to be a Sonoma County Supervisor. While these are important positions, there is an obvious leadership gap if a meeting in Sacramento, with the Legislature and Governor in town, has me as its ranking elected official speaking with you. Let's get Arnold to one of these meetings - soon!

Rohnert Park is proud to be a founding member of the Sonoma County Waste Management Agency, a joint powers authority representing all nine municipalities in Sonoma County and the County of Sonoma. In 2001, the Agency members unanimously adopted a resolution of support for Expanded Producer Responsibility principles. About a year ago our membership unanimously adopted our Extended Producer Responsibility Implementation Plan. These documents are also available on our website -www.recyclenow.org - and I encourage you to review them. We are proud of the leadership Sonoma County has taken regarding advocacy for Product Stewardship.

Our Current Rohnert Park Mayor, Jake Mackenzie, is the 2008 Chair of the League of California Cities Environmental Quality Committee. That Committee will be meeting next week, on Thursday/January 17th, to set its goals for the year ahead. Extended Producer Responsibility/Product Stewardship is on the agenda. It is important that we be heard at that meeting. Heidi Sanborn will be giving us more details on how we can positively affect the outcome of that meeting.

At our meeting last night the Rohnert Park City Council directed Mayor Mackenzie to sign letters to our Assemblymember and Senator regarding our key legislative goals for 2008. Mayor Mackenzie asked me to deliver these letters, with copies for others including the Governor, today. I will be going to the Capitol to do so after my presentation this morning. Here is an excerpt from our letter to Assemblymember Huffman -

Your sponsorship of AB 1109, the California Lighting Efficiency and Toxics Reduction Act, and your support of SB 966, which seeks to control pharmaceutical waste disposal, demonstrate your awareness of Extended Producer Responsibility/Product Stewardship (EPR/PS) issues.

In 2008, there are likely to be significant legislative opportunities to further EPR/PS goals. With state and local finances severely strained, it needs to be acknowledged that government does not have the resources or capacity to effectively manage toxic waste products. Ratepayers and taxpayers should not be funding the management of products at their end-of-life as a subsidy to their manufacturers, thus enabling the continued production of products that are designed for disposal.

The California Integrated Waste Management Board has adopted its Strategic Directive 5 to promote environmental sustainability through safe product stewardship. The Association of Bay Area Governments and Sonoma County Waste Management Agency, organizations to which the City of Rohnert Park belongs, have strongly endorsed EPR/PS as important policy goals. We look forward to your support of legislation in 2008 to further effectuate these policies on a statewide basis.

We know 2008 is going to be a tough year for the State of California. That is a reason why I believe it may be the best time to move Product Stewardship forward. Let's review the California Product Stewardship Council Mission -

To shift California's product waste management system from one focused on government funded and ratepayer financed waste diversion to one that relies on producer responsibility in order to reduce public costs and drive improvements in product design that promote environmental sustainability.

Now is the time to help our Legislators and the Governor find their political will on a bipartisan basis to "reduce public costs" and "promote environmental sustainability." Working together we can advance Product Stewardship throughout California - let us do so now!

Thank you.