THE NORTHWEST PRODUCT STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL: A LEVER LONG ENOUGH?

David Stitzhal

Extending responsibility for products to the post-consumer stage

Before describing how a remote geographic corner of the United States, with less than 2 percent of the country's market share, is attempting to influence the structure of commercial transactions and the nature of product design in this country, it is important to set out a few definitions.

Prologue: EPR

In her thorough and widely circulated article for *Pollution Prevention Review* ("EPR: What Does It Mean? Where Is It Headed?," Volume 8, Number 4, Autumn 1998), Bette K. Fishbein defines EPR, or Extended Producer Responsibility, as "the extension of the responsibility of producers for the environmental impacts of their products to the entire product life cycle, and especially for their take-back, recycling, and disposal." She further notes that EPR has focused primarily on responsibility at the post-consumer stage—i.e., once products have reached the end of their useful life.

Thus, "EPR shifts the responsibility for discarded materials that would otherwise be managed by local government [and taxpayers] *to* private industry [and consumers], thereby incorporating the costs of product disposal and recycling into product price" (my emphasis and additions). The core features of an EPR economy, should it come to pass, will be the price shift referenced by Fishbein, coupled with EPR's inherent ability to incentivize for the producer a profit-driven reason to design products with life-cycle environmental impacts in mind.

As Fishbein succinctly summarizes, and for reasons I will not review here, EPR has come to

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stand for "extended product responsibility" in the United States. Fishbein notes that "product responsibility" is considerably broader than "producer responsibility." She further notes, "The danger in this lack of specificity is that such a policy, by not focusing on the post-consumer stage, may fail to allocate any industry responsibility for this critical part of the product life cycle."

Product Stewardship

You would not be the first if you were to quizzically ask, "Where then does 'product stewardship' fit into this range of definitions?" As described below in greater detail, the Northwest Product Stewardship Council chose this name after much discussion. Generally speaking, in its use of the term product stewardship, the Council encompasses "producer" as well as "product" responsibility.[1]

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It was the Council's intention to select and use a term that might actually mean something to the citizens and business people of their communities. The Council felt that "product stewardship," in contrast to EPR, might give rise in listeners' minds to a concrete mental image and an understanding of this difficult concept—a concept based on the non-soundbite ideas of price signal shifting and the internalization of environmental externalities.

Council Genesis

In 1998, aware of a growing international interest in and implementation of EPR, a small, committed group of solid waste professionals from government agencies in the greater Seattle region began meeting to learn more about this policy tool, and how it might be used domestically.[2]

Down at the Dump

Alone at the end of the product chain, in the wasteland of post-consumerdom, local governments are responsible for disposing of our nation's waste, recycling what they can through still-maturing infrastructure and markets. This system affords no market feedback—in terms of waste, recyclability, or toxicity—to upstream members of the product chain.

For example, a manufacturer may choose to use heavy metal-based inks and bulky, nonrecyclable packaging. That manufacturer generally is sufficiently insulated from the marketplace that it will never receive a price signal documenting the disposal and remediation costs associated with the volume and toxicity of its packaging. The manufacturer will therefore never incorporate those costs into the product price, nor will it have an economic incentive to minimize the environmentally harmful packaging characteristics.

Many local government policy makers and economists believe that the current system unevenly spreads the environmental costs of commerce over the entire population/tax base rather than among direct consumers. A more equitable solution would isolate the environmental costs of a given commodity within its own life cycle or chain of commerce—from raw material extraction to production, sale, use, and ultimate disposal.

Currently, the consumer who pays for a new television also pays through garbage rates to throw the television out, and pays again, through taxes, to cover the costs of road repair made necessary by garbage truck wear-and-tear, and for the costs of any eventual environmental remediation. Significantly, the consumer who does not purchase a television subsidizes the TV owner's expenses by also paying garbage rates and taxes.

Local governments see the current market situation as an "unfunded mandate" dictating that they and their broad citizen base bear the undif-

ferentiated costs of post-consumer disposal. Garbage is full of bulky, toxic, overpackaged, nonrecyclable—and sometimes reusable—items. The management of this diverse waste stream is almost entirely on the shoulders of local governments and taxpayers.

But what's a little region to do? During early meetings of the proto-Council, the room was filled with images of tails earnestly trying to wag dogs, and Archimedes' boastful claim of "Give me a lever long enough, and I shall move the world." Discussions centered around how local agencies, and our economic region, could harness the emerging principles of EPR and the budding U.S. dialogue to address the burden of garbage's unfunded mandate.

Despite spirited discussion, however, the process moved slowly for the first months of 1998. This was caused in equal parts by the lack of local agency support and funding, the absence of clear federal guidance, limited time, and slightly divergent perspectives on how best to move forward.

On the Path to Sustainability

Then in August 1998, the Seattle City Council adopted a new solid waste plan called "On the Path to Sustainability." The plan adopts zero waste as a guiding principle, and includes product stewardship as one of the programs for achieving future goals. The notion of product stewardship was included as a result of input from several quarters: presentations by national experts during a series of colloquia about progressive waste management practices sponsored by the city early in the planning process; Mayor Schell's interest in "natural capitalism"; and the interest of a citizen-comprised Solid Waste Advisory Committee which strongly supported plan elements that addressed waste prevention and product stewardship.

Support for product stewardship in the solid waste plan cleared the way for city staff to justify budget expenditures on work toward this goal. Using these funds, a consultant was hired to focus, facilitate, and staff the efforts of the nascent council.[3] Having a point person was useful in keeping things moving between meetings. It allowed government members to strongly express their opinions without appearing as if they were trying to steer the entire committee or the process. Having consistent consultant staff has also allowed a smooth transition from one funding source to another.

Council Structure

Early Council meetings spent considerable time determining a governance structure, a mission statement, a decision-making process, and other structural components of the group.[4] Then, as now, the Council does not have a defined legal structure. As the draft by-laws state, the Council shall:

> operate for the time being as an unincorporated association of members interested in learning more about product stewardship and who support the mission.... The Council was initially convened by a steering committee and the steering committee continues to coordinate and oversee the activities of the Council. As more experience is gained, the steering committee will work with members to determine the most effective organizational structure to adopt. It is the intention of the steering committee to determine a long-term organizational structure in 2001.[5]

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The Council's mission statement was also developed at this time: To integrate the principles of product stewardship into the policy and economic structures of the Pacific Northwest.

The Council's Work Begins

As structural and process issues were being resolved, the Council turned its attention to achieving its mission statement. The group decided it needed a broad base of both input and support, drawing resources from many different sectors of the community. The Council also recognized that the topic of product stewardship was absent from the respective sectors' radar screens. In order to broaden input and build support, the Council first had to educate.

Council Recruitment

To begin this process, the Council convened a selected group of individuals from a cross-section of the community. The Council sought representation from academia, business and industry, policy groups, government, elected officials, and non-profit organizations.

Targeted individuals had some knowledge of environmental issues, though not necessarily an awareness of EPR or product stewardship. They also had some influence in their professional arena. The Council sought individuals who could commit a minimum of 10 to 15 hours of their time.

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These individuals were asked to help convene the Northwest Council for Extended Product Responsibility and serve as a brain trust.[6] The recruitment process was challenging in that an introductory phone call had to simultaneously define EPR, outline the Council, describe involvement, and request participation.

Ultimately, about 20 people agreed to attend a series of three all-morning meetings. At least one representative from each sector was in attendance for at least one of the meetings. The broad goals of the meetings were to discuss EPR and to inform the direction of the Council.

Initial Meetings

Prior to convening the first Full Council meeting, the steering committee arrived at the operating assumption that an event or conference of some kind was necessary to increase local awareness of EPR, to advance local dialogue, and to spur pilot implementation of EPR principles. Thus, the first Full Council meeting focused on forming the Full Council, setting ground rules and expectations for process, exploring the definition of EPR, and presenting the notion of an EPR event.

Between the first and second Full Council meetings, staff incorporated Full Council member comments into a working definition of EPR[7] and began to more narrowly define what an event might look like. Going into the second Full Council meeting, the steering committee brought the following objectives: 1) identify actions that need to be taken to make an "EPR event" successful, 2) identify the essential components and design of the event, and 3) identify who to invite and how to get them to participate.

During the second meeting, a revised working definition of EPR was presented and approved, and the idea of the event was further explored. Ultimately, the purpose of the event was identified as follows:

- To draw attention to EPR and articulate reasons why EPR is worth pursuing—identify the benefits for all players, identify the costs of not pursuing EPR.
- To establish a structure that allows ongoing involvement by a group of diverse interests

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committed to equitably integrating EPR into the economy and social fabric of the Pacific Northwest.

- To initiate several tangible EPR activities and demonstration projects (coordinated by an action plan) to be carried out collaboratively between the public and private sectors and advocacy interests. These projects should address high-priority products.

The notion of having an EPR event as an early defining activity for the Council was not, however, a foregone conclusion. Several Full Council members expressed concern about this approach as a strategy for launching the Council's efforts, and about its efficacy for achieving the Council's goals. In particular, a few members of the Full Council felt that the local soil had not yet been sufficiently prepared, and that no one would attend an event because of their lack of understanding of EPR's relevance to them.

Ultimately, the decision was made to hold an event a year in the future. The ensuing year would be used for planning the event. More importantly, it would also be used for "tilling the soil" and cultivating a receptive audience. After much discussion by the steering committee and solicitation of input and guidance through the third Full Council meeting, a cultivation plan began to take shape.

A Name Change

An early first step in moving toward the event was a decision, recommended by the steering committee and accepted by the Full Council, to change the organization's name to the Northwest Product Stewardship Council.

Steering committee members generally agreed that the term "extended producer responsibility" is more exacting, and certainly more recognized in policy discussions throughout the world. And in the United States, "extended product responsibility" was a widely recognized finesse that pointed toward a more voluntary approach. The Committee also recognized, however, that the audiences they were targeting over the next years would be either larger businesses (which would already be savvy about the notion, and likely suspicious of bringing European-style EPR to the United States) or citizens, businesses, and public sector representatives who would not have been introduced to the concept at all.

Additionally, it became clear during our initial efforts to recruit Full Council members and audiences for outreach meetings that the definition of the EPR acronym had either no or negative resonance with our target audiences. By contrast, the term product stewardship, while not a perfect solution, did conjure notions of personal and corporate responsibility, and successfully avoided confusion with "extended warranty" issues.

Defining the Workplan

The Council then moved on to establishing subcommittees to accomplish a more defined workplan. The first subcommittee focused on outreach. The goals of this subcommittee were primarily to initiate and spread dialogue about product stewardship through key local organizations. A "dog and pony" show was developed that covered topics such as the basic definition of product stewardship, examples of EPR and product stewardship from around the world, and what the Council's intentions were.

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We then solicited meetings from small business associations, environmental groups, economic development organizations, policy development centers, and others. The specific goals of the meetings were to convey the con-

cept of product stewardship and EPR and to solicit initial feedback and responses from diverse audiences. Useful feedback was gained from these meetings, and important relationships were started, the fruit of which has yet to fully ripen.

Other subcommittees were also established. As a way to lay the groundwork for a successful event, the steering committee and the Full Council chose to identify products around which hands-on pilot projects could be created, thereby producing tangible examples of product stewardship in the Northwest. The year leading up to the EPR event would be spent developing and implementing these showcase pilots.

Through research and discussion, the steering committee developed criteria for the selection of products to be targeted. Selection criteria included: handling costs, a link to local industry, legislative interest, toxicity, quantity in waste stream, industry openness, ease of implementation, and clear product chain.

The subcommittee's workplan is focused on environmentally preferable purchasing (EPP) for computers and related equipment.

Using these criteria, two product groups (or commodities) were selected, and subcommittees were created for each. The selected commodities were computer equipment/CRTs and tires.

Subcommittee Spotlights

Environmentally Preferable Computer Purchasing Project

This subcommittee's work has been funded to date by the King County Solid Waste Division and the City of Seattle Public Utilities. Subcommittee membership includes representatives from the City of Seattle, King County, EPA Headquarters, and the National Recycling Coalition.

The subcommittee's workplan is focused on environmentally preferable purchasing (EPP) for computers and related equipment. Initial activities involved gathering examples of existing purchasing guidelines that characterize environmentally preferable attributes of IT (information technology) equipment.

The project also involves working with large-scale, Northwest-based users of computers (such as Starbucks, REI, Microsoft, Boeing, Nordstrom, and area municipalities) to learn more about their purchasing protocols, and to encourage them to build environmentally preferable purchasing guidelines into their purchasing specifications. Target partners include major Northwest businesses, as well as local governments. Ideally, the project will result in a greater awareness and use of EPP criteria.

A third major project component involves working with equipment manufacturers to identify what EPP criteria are already being met by their products, and to encourage the incorporation of further EPP principles into design processes for future products. Ideally, the project will result in the increased use of EPP guidelines in the design, production, distribution, and end-of-life management of computer equipment.

Tires and Extended Product Responsibility Project

The Council's tire subcommittee receives project support from the City of Seattle. Representatives from the Northwest Tire Dealers Association have been working closely with three consultants to develop an industry-supported approach to the tire problem. The team has completed an extensive review of tire programs in other states and provinces. Currently, they are working to develop a program that incorporates the most successful elements of these other efforts, and that will increase the availability of end-of-life options for tires in the region.

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Products and the Environment NW Conference

The Council's event subcommittee ultimately pulled together a successful two-day conference in April 2000 in which nearly 200 attendees participated. The event was called "Products and the Environment NW." The heaviest recruitment effort for the event focused on the business community. At the event, about 40 percent of the attendees were from government, and another 40 percent were from business. In addition, 14 percent were drawn from non-profit organizations. Academic and citizen attendees numbered 5 percent and 3 percent, respectively.

Speakers were drawn from abroad, across the United States, and locally. A mix of plenary and break-out sessions covered such topics as "product as service and product take-back," "policy approaches and U.S. activities," and "product development and manufacturing."

By all estimations, the conference was successful in meeting its goals, which were to expand awareness of product stewardship and develop a structure in which ongoing dialogue and action could continue.[8]

Ancillary Projects

In addition to the outreach activities of the steering committee, and the subcommittee activities described above, steering committee members are also engaged in other product stewardship programs. The following is a brief overview of these projects. Given that government and consultant staff overlap on many of the projects, they are considered to fall under the umbrella of the NWPSC.

Medical Industry Waste Prevention Roundtable

The Medical Industry Waste Prevention Roundtable (MIRT) receives funding from the King County Solid Waste Division, EPA Region X, and the Business and Industry Resource Venture of the Greater Seattle Chamber of Commerce. The program has brought together health care professionals from the region's hospitals and biotech laboratories. After an initial series of general information sharing meetings, feedback from attendees led to development of a series of in-depth, half-day seminars.

The seminar series, still in the process of being rolled out, includes the following topics:

- Managing Plastics
- Managing Chemicals from Hospitals and Biomedical Labs (a two-part seminar)
- Exploring Alternative Products: Durables and Reusables, and
- Environmentally Preferable Purchasing

Assistance is available from project staff to help hospitals implement any changes they take on as a result of the seminars.

The primary outcome of the seminars to date has been the creation of a subcommittee to reestablish a once-active recycling program for polypropylene blue wrap, a sterilization and draping material often used in hospitals. Kimberly-Clark, the manufacturer of this product, is willing to pay a processing subsidy of 3 cents for every pound of new material they sell to a given institution. The money can then be used to help cover sorting and transportation costs associated with a collection program.

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Retail Apparel Product Stewardship Demonstration Program

The retail apparel sector was selected for project work due to the presence of numerous appar-

el industry corporate headquarters in the Northwest. These include Columbia Sportswear, Eddie Bauer, Filson, Hanna Anderson, Nike, Nordstrom, Norm Thompson Outfitters, and Recreational Equipment Incorporated (REI).

The project steering committee includes members from the City of Seattle, King County, and EPA Region X, along with two consultants. The project is run in conjunction with the Retail Grocery Product Stewardship Demonstration Program.

The project has been successful in recruiting participation by a number of the companies noted above. Involvement ranges from information sharing, reuse of in-store fixtures, and PVC elimination, to looking at alternative fabric sources and textile take-back and recycling.

Retail Grocery Product Stewardship Demonstration Program

The Retail Grocery Product Stewardship Demonstration Program initially recruited participation from national grocery chains, local representatives of the national chains, and locally based grocery and food cooperatives. Recruitment efforts led to a number of meetings with subgroupings of the grocers in an effort to identify opportunities for product stewardship pilot projects.

After much discussion and consideration, a central focus developed: How is the grocery industry responding to the disposal impact and cost associated with waxed cardboard (used mainly for produce, meat, and seafood)? This project will compare and contrast at least two strategies: 1) use of non-waxed, heavy-duty cardboard boxes that can replace waxed boxes and that can be used to transport produce directly from field to store, and 2) expanded local use of durable, reusable plastic totes for produce transport.

After much discussion and consideration, a central focus developed: How is the grocery industry responding to the disposal impact and cost associated with waxed cardboard (used mainly for produce, meat, and seafood)?

As noted above, the project is run in conjunction with the Retail Apparel Product Stewardship Demonstration Program, and shares the same steering committee.

Computer Recovery Network

The King County Solid Waste Division is in the late stages of developing a program to strengthen the local infrastructure for nonworking computer monitors (and other IT equipment). County discussions with local reuse, refurbishing, and recycling businesses identified heavily leaded, nonworking monitors as the most difficult component of the information technology waste stream to process. The program is also targeting monitors because of the upcoming national switch to HDTV, which is likely to result in millions of functional and nonworking monitors entering municipal waste streams over the next five to ten years.

Building on the success of the Minnesota end-of-life electronics management program, which successfully solicited financial program support from Sony and Panasonic, early program attempts were made to recruit the assistance of original equipment manufacturers. This effort proved fruitless, and the county has instead developed a program that makes a voucher subsidy available to residents and small businesses for the first four months. After this time, the costs of dead monitor disposal must be paid for by the disposer. The glass from the monitors will, under current program designs, be returned to a monitor manufacturer for reuse.

While clearly not product stewardship or producer responsibility, this program is an important first step toward creating in the consumer's mind the notion that products have end-of-life costs as well as up-front costs.

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What Does "Voluntary" Mean?

As local government projects such as the Northwest Product Stewardship Council, the Greater Austin Waste Reduction Alliance, the Midwest Carpet Roundtable, the Electronic Recycling Initiative Task Force, and others move down the road toward voluntary product stewardship, parties on all sides have begun asking for a more precise definition of "voluntary."

Governments want businesses to achieve a degree of legitimate progress toward changing the design, material selection, and end-of-life management costs of their products. Businesses, on the other hand, want governments to assure a level, predictable playing field that allows environmental progress to occur in the free market.

These goal posts keep shifting. As evidenced by the diverse mix of government programs and policies listed above, the United States has not drawn a clear line in the sand. The United States does not have a Green Dot-style European packaging program, a British Columbian emphasis on third party organizations, an Australian covenant system, or any of the other models currently under refinement around the world. Similarly, there is no industry standard for what constitutes sufficient voluntary effort.

Out of this diversity, however, may grow harmony. As Fishbein notes, "An important lesson of the Ni-Cd battery take-back program is that action by a few states can lead industry to create national programs to avoid dealing with numerous conflicting state requirements." It could be argued that the Northwest Product Stewardship Council is taking a page out of this playbook. While explicitly not legislative, the Council's subcommittee pilot projects are endeavoring to move industry partners toward greater involvement in materials management for their products. This is being done with the hope that such movement will occur in a one-way, ratcheted process that increasingly raises the bar for other industry players. This bar will be raised until a *de facto* industry standard is set either by the mechanism of competition, or through concerted effort on the part of a given industry leader.

How, then, can a municipality formalize a request for monitorable and measurable action, while still allowing businesses to move toward product stewardship in a voluntary manner? One of the challenges faced by the NWPSC's subcommittees has been the absence of industry point people, and the absence of information necessary for assessing current environmental impact and actions to mitigate that impact. From a government standpoint, it is difficult to help industry voluntarily achieve environmental goals when businesses do not have people and budgets to work on the issue.

Governments want businesses to achieve a degree of legitimate progress toward changing the design, material selection, and end-of-life management costs of their products.

Compare this issue, if you will, to the task of regulating a teenager's schedule. Capricious restrictions on their time and movement will hamper what they do best—namely, play, mature, experience, test, and innovate. Alternatively, a total absence of operating standards and reporting will allow self-interested behavior and unintended consequences to proliferate, harming the teens' surroundings, and possibly themselves.

If the goals in stewarding a teenager are to imbue in the child self-control, compassion, self-reliance, a sense of wonder, passion for life, and the myriad other qualities we wish for them, neither legislating conduct nor allowing unfettered behavior is likely to optimize the outcome.

However, measured voluntarism might move us further toward this goal. If teen and parents can agree on certain mutual, measurable outcomes—good grades, safe driving, community involvement, and physical activity, for exam-

ple—the means toward those ends are less important than effectively measuring and reporting progress toward those ends. A minimum 3.7 GPA and no dented fenders (rather than legislated hours spent on homework and driving restrictions) become the terms of agreement.

Similarly with industry, accountability and measured progress toward mutually identified goals and outcomes may prove more feasible in the United States than either industry-initiated volunteerism or legislatively defined codes of conduct.

Moving Toward Product Stewardship

The following list of requirements and reporting mechanisms could help move us toward product stewardship in the United States:

- An easily accessed point person, well-positioned in the company to address municipal concerns.
- Tracking and disclosure of environmental impacts associated with each product or service (akin to Europe's current move toward Integrated Product Policy). Impacts could be measured in terms of effects such as greenhouse gas emissions, distribution miles traveled, stack emissions, heavy metal content, and recycled content. One model for this could be the creation of a Toxics Release Inventory organized by product, rather than by facility or company.
- R&D plans for addressing the items noted in the environmental impacts disclosure.
- An explicit fiscal and staff budget allocated to these tasks by each business (or industry).
- Demonstration of progress toward explicit goals.
- Demonstration of efforts by each business to work with suppliers, retailers, and other members of their product chain.
- Documentation of efforts to develop industry-specific working groups, and measurement of outcomes.

Similarly with industry, accountability and measured progress toward mutually identified goals and outcomes may prove more feasible in the United States than either industry-initiated volunteerism or legislatively defined codes of conduct.

This list is not prescriptive in terms of demanding product take-back, or requiring recycled content or decreased toxicity. However, the information tracking and reporting mechanisms described above could create a structure that would allow:

- consumers to make more informed choices,
- industries to define an ever-rising standard of conduct and production (while restricting free-riders[9]), and
- the economy to shift a product's environmental externalities into the product chain, where they could take their rightful place next to the other costs of production.

This list of possible requirements and reporting mechanisms is hardly exhaustive, nor has it been tested in the laboratory of public policy. It would also require strong government leadership and expertise, probably from the federal level, particularly if the free-rider problem is to be addressed.[10] However, the principle of establishing an explicit definition of voluntarism seems sound. In fact it will be necessary in the United States if we are to move beyond what ultimately is an unsustainable and narrow focus on recycling and emissions monitoring as solutions to environmental degradation.

While businesses and industries may consider providing this information a hardship, providing it voluntarily will allow them to introduce into the product stewardship debate some of their own terms and conditions, and could render unnecessary an eventual government-defined playing field.

Such measured voluntarism would go a long way toward demonstrating to government a level of voluntary commitment, while still allowing the private sector to do what it does best: play, mature, experience, test, and innovate. And with government and industry on the same side of the fulcrum, Archimedes' lever need not be nearly so long.

Notes

1. The Council's adopted definition of product stewardship states: Product Stewardship is a principle that directs all actors in the life cycle of a product to minimize the impacts of that product on the environment. The concept is unique because of its emphasis on the entire product system in achieving sustainable development. Under product stewardship, all participants in the product life cycle—designers, suppliers, manufacturers, distributors, retailers, consumers, recyclers, and disposers—share responsibility for the environmental effects of products.

2. Founding members of the Northwest Product Stewardship Council Steering Committee include: EPA Region X, Full Circle Environmental, King County Commission for Marketing Recyclable Materials, King County Solid Waste Division, City of Portland, Portland Metro, City of Seattle Public Utilities, Snohomish County Solid Waste Division, and Washington Citizens for Resource Conservation.

3. The author of this article, a consultant known to most of the early participants of the Council, and active in product stewardship issues, was hired to fill this role.

4. This article uses the term "Council" to refer to the steering committee of the Northwest Product Stewardship Council. References to the "Full Council" refer to the larger assemblage of individuals who were brought together to provide broad input to the Council's process.

5. This structure could range from moving the Council into an existing nonprofit (which could take over the facilitation role, provide a home for the Council, and allow a platform from which to seek foundation support), to creating a formal multigovernment association, such as a Council of Governments, to launching a new, independent nonprofit.

6. After much discussion at early steering committee meetings, a decision was made to use the term "product" instead of "producer." This stemmed from a recognition of EPA's direction on the issue, and was also strategic in the sense that the Council did not want, at the outset, to prevent participation from large industries that might already be familiar with the debate, and therefore might choose not to enter into dialogue with the Council if they felt unfairly targeted as producers.

7. The definition of EPR eventually arrived at was substantially similar to the definition of product stewardship set out in note 1 above.

8. Building on the success of the conference, an Oregon chapter of the Northwest Product Stewardship Council has formed and is planning to host a second conference in 2001. They are also establishing working groups on electronics and other topics.

9. Fishbein notes with regard to free riders:

> Free-riders—companies that do not contribute to the funding of EPR programs yet still benefit from them—are a major problem in voluntary programs.
>
> Solutions may vary from regulatory enforcement to pressure from trade associations to publicizing the names of free-riders. In order to drive product innovation toward sustainability, EPR programs need to reward the companies that are acting most responsibly and prevent free-riders from gaining a competitive advantage.

10. Governments must, for their part, also commit to purchasing goods and services from companies that meet these standards.

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