

Managing the World Resources: International and Local New Rules

By Rick Anthony, Chair, Zero Waste International Alliance

It's now time to internationally and locally adopt the Zero Waste Approach to Resource Management. The basis of this approach is documented in www.zwia.org, global and business principles. Acting globally and locally we should insist on:

- No burn (incineration), no bury (landfill) projects and policies,
- Local democracy for community decisions on discard rules for products and practices,
- Product redesign for recycling or composting for community health and safety.

Zero Waste is a key to sustainability and with the Zero Waste Approach we can plan local level programs that provide jobs and resources for future populations. We can no longer allow pollution as an acceptable practice. Cost analysis, should show the true cost of products and packages and use a "cradle to cradle" (product, use and back to product) not "cradle to grave" (product, use, landfill/incinerator) analysis. Burning or burying discards should never be a design option (final use of a product or package).

When the World Resource Forum discusses a world scarcity of resources and the European Union discusses current targets; recovering all metal, burning no trees, and culture change: why are we arguing about waste vs. resource management? Even at the International Sustainability Conference (Rio+20) international reports at solid waste management sessions suggested that zero waste was the goal.

Let's advocate globally and locally the Zero Waste approach to planning and turn local and national solid waste plans into zero waste prevention and recovery plans.

These should include:

1. Discard composition sorts into the 12 "master resource categories" to show markets and value and identify current market and facility voids (no local markets).
2. Focus up-stream (before use at the purchasing level) on prevention (new rules in purchasing and new programs for preventing discards, reduce and reuse), using highest and best use as priorities (feeding people, then animals and then the soil).

3. Redesign recovery programs to collect and process discards into marketable resources.
4. Ban special discards designed for landfill and incineration.
5. Develop policies, programs and needed facilities to attain a zero waste goal.

All data would be gathered around the 12 market categories. Stake holders meetings (reusers, recyclers, composters, environmental activists would be held by commodity (reuse, paper, metal, glass, plastic, compostable organics, wood etc.) to deal with supply and demand issues, spotlighting zero waste champions (Zero Waste Cities and Businesses) as case studies.

Goal: World and local goal should be Zero Waste by 2040

Strategy:

- culture change (move from consumption to sustainable lifestyles)
- close circle economy (cradle to cradle, recycling and composting as end uses)
- decoupling (making the economic system local and sustainable)

Waste management plans regulate discard management without concern for resources and, waste and pollution emissions' through landfill and incineration. A Zero Waste Plan focuses on community resources, jobs and economic sustainability. Let's all go this way for the next decade.

In San Diego the City Council has set a Zero Waste by 2040 goal and has asked staff to come back with a plan. One of the ten largest Cities in the United States, San Diego, is ready to take on culture change, close circle economies and decoupling through stake holder action.