

NRC National Zero Waste Conference Host State Evaluation Update

Background

In the NRC Conference Committee report to the NRC Board for the Board call on 4-10-19, the following Options were highlighted:

1. **NRC proceed with CRRA/NCRA proposal**, and NRC suggest we organize the National ZW Conference on **Thursday/Friday, 3/19-20, 2020**, to minimize date conflicts with CRA, NERC and KOR. Wednesday, 3/18 could be a day for tours and/or special trainings, to bridge the gap between the NCRA Recycling Update and the NRC National Zero Waste Conference.
2. **NRC proceed with CRRA, and explore alternate dates/locations**. In their proposal, CRRA suggested an alternative might be partnering with **Zero Waste San Diego** in a similar way to what was proposed to do with NCRA. ZW San Diego has held a regional Symposium for 6 years which attracted about 350 people this year. The ZW San Diego Symposium was held on **February 12, 2019**. It's possible CRRA might also consider working with NRC on a completely different date and location that is mutually OK.
3. **NRC proceed to select another date and location** for this event **anywhere in the country**. NRC could select a place that has reasonable costs and will likely draw a good crowd, and coordinate with any recycling organizations that are in that location.

Analysis

I called the Carolina Recycling Association and NERC to explore the details of what the consequences might be of holding these events during the same week. Attached are notes of those calls. I've also emailed Kansas, but haven't heard back from them. NERC also provided their compilation of upcoming events for 2019, for us to consider. It appears that our affiliate (CRA) and NERC would not mind NRC organizing the National Zero Waste Conference during the proposed Zero Waste Week of 3/15-21, 2020.

Carolina may be moving their conference anyway, because the Southeast Recycling Conference (SERC) in Florida just moved their conference to the same dates in 2020. Carolina is thinking of the week after (week of March 22, 2020). If we proceeded during ZW Week in Berkeley, we would also be competing directly with SERC.

NCRA also offered to hold NRC event at another time besides ZW Week. I suggested to NCRA considering holding the NRC Conference on March 12-13, 2020 with NCRA. It could still be considered as and promoted as part of Zero Waste Week. Then NRC attendees could stay for the ZW Youth Conference over the weekend, possibly tours on Monday, and through to NCRA's Recycling Update (RU) on Tuesday, March 17. I floated the idea of the NRC moving its event to the Thursday/Friday before like this to NERC and Lynn Rubinstein didn't think that was much help. NCRA offered to host NRC another month, and some of their members thought that might be preferable.

Dave Keeling has also recently explored the possibility of Keep America Beautiful (KAB) hosting the NRC National Zero Waste Conference. KAB has indicated that they are open to that idea. There are some concerns about that, as KAB has not historically been supportive of Zero Waste, and it might take away from the perception of NRC's National Zero Waste Conference being on the cutting edge of information-sharing on Zero Waste. KAB is also in a very weak position, as it laid off its recycling staff a couple years

ago, and they have not rebuilt their staffing in this area to be a forceful leader in recycling like NRC is working to become. Although the KAB Annual Conference could be a good location for NRC to collaborate with KAB on something like a Regional Markets Workshop, it could be a mistake to align NRC so closely with the sponsors of KAB for the National Zero Waste Conference, given many of those sponsors are not supportive of Zero Waste policies and programs. The National Zero Waste Conference is too important strategically for NRC to use it as a tool to also help KAB with the troubles KAB has recently had.

I confirmed with NCRA that the early bird registration for RU was \$105 for members and \$180 for non-members. I asked if NRC members could get the NCRA members rate, but haven't heard back on that yet. We could have people register for NCRA and NRC separately and solicit sponsors separately to keep finances separate, but co-promote each other's events with links and promotional messages. The RU pricing is similar to pre-conference workshops and trainings done with Resource Recycling. We have charged \$125 for Zero Waste USA trainings on Zero Waste at Resource Recycling in recent years. Regarding sponsors, we would agree on a No-Call List for NRC so that NRC did not solicit historic sponsors of NCRA, as we did with RAM for the joint Reception at Resource Recycling in Minneapolis in 2017. That would enable NRC to solicit sponsors from the rest of California and the rest of the country for this event. NCRA also noted that they do not solicit sponsors from any firm that owns a landfill but would be OK if NRC wanted to do that.

NCRA confirmed that their venue, Freight and Salvage in Berkeley, is available 3/17-20 in 2020, and would rent for \$2000/day in 2020. There's only one room there, so we would be limited to a single track, unless we wanted to consider holding other sessions in other nearby venues (which exist). Freight and Salvage has an unusual requirement – we would need to vacate by 4 pm each day, as they rent the facility out for evening events. We could supplement a single-track approach there with topic lunches at local restaurants (on their own, so decreasing NRC's food and beverage costs) and/or topic drinks and dinners after 4 at local restaurants (on their own). There are [LOTS of great restaurants in close walking distance](#) as this is right downtown.

I've requested NCRA's food and beverage costs for 2019. NCRA indicated that they are particularly low because they use a lot of volunteers to help staff the food functions (in trade for attending the event), and they use a high quality, environmentally sensitive, low cost outside caterer with really great food. They also get some donated food and coffee from area restaurants.

Freight and Salvage is a couple of blocks from the downtown Berkeley BART station for rail access to both Oakland and San Francisco airports and the entire San Francisco Bay Area. There are a lot of [hotels in the area](#) that could meet all levels of needs. We could minimize NRC's liability by not reserving overnight rooms, or arranging blocks of rooms that would be released after a booking deadline so that NRC would not have any liability. We would only need to book rooms for speakers that we are making travel arrangements for (if any).

Given the recent performance of NCRA attracting over 400 people the past 2 years to their Recycling Update, it is likely NRC would attract about 50% of them to at least one day of a National Zero Waste Conference to follow the 2020 Recycling Update on 3/17/20. That would mean NRC would only need to attract another 100-150 to meet our target of 350 people.

Conference Co-Chair Leslie Lukacs and I discussed priorities for NRC. We agreed that NRC needs to achieve its 3 goals as key to evaluating dates and locations for this event:

1. Attract 300-350 people from around the U.S.
2. Provide latest information on Zero Waste communities and Zero Waste businesses.
3. Develop NRC's capacity to organize national conferences.

In addition, given the importance of this event to NRC's long-term Strategic Plan, it's particularly important that NRC:

1. Generate a significant amount of net revenue
2. Attract a large group of diverse people
3. Demonstrate its staffing and financial capabilities for organizing such a major national event.

On the timeline approved by the NRC Board in December 2018, we agreed that we would confirm location, review calendars of other events and set dates for this event by April 2019. If we don't go forward with this proposal, it will take another 1-3 months to identify where to locate this event, putting us behind the adopted timeline by 1-3 months.

Based on the above criteria, the CRRRA/NCRA base proposal is the simplest, quickest and most cost-effective way for NRC to accomplish its many goals with this event.

Recommended Motion

Motion: NRC approves the CRRRA/NCRA Proposal, directs the NRC Executive Director and/or President to negotiate and execute a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with CRRRA and NCRA, and negotiate and execute an agreement to reserve space in Berkeley, California at the Freight and Salvage for March 2020.

Moved by: Rick Anthony

2nd by: Gary Liss

Motion Unanimous