

NCRA – TESTIMONY AT MEETINGS ON AB 32 IMPLEMENTATION:

TO ETAAC IN MERCED ON NOVEMBER 29, 2007 AND

TO CARB IN DIAMOND BAR [SCAQMD] ON NOVEMBER 30, 2007.

My name is Arthur Boone and I am the education chair of the Northern California Recycling Association, a 200 member group located mostly in the Bay Area that has both followed and led the movement from garbage as usual in the 1970s to integrated waste management in the 1990s to zero waste today. Recycling has gone from a few things we kept out of the garbage thirty years ago to the major strategy for used materials management. Just like there should be no incurable diseases, there should be no unrecyclable materials. And we're getting there.

Thanks to the kindness of Dorothy Rothrock, your industrial committee chair, I was included in her committee's agendas and discussions but my own schedule precluded my more active involvement during the summer when much of their work was being done. I'm sorry but appreciate her courtesies.

To go back a bit. About twelve years ago the USEPA began collecting data from basic American industries about how much energy they saved by using a recycled feedstock rather than starting their industrial processes with virgin materials. The paper, glass, metals, and plastics industries reported back to the USEPA and the agency was able to determine a simple number, expressed as a therms saved per ton of finished material, that the recycling then going on allowed.

There were impressive energy reductions. A few examples: if you make paper from used papers, you don't need to cook wood chips to break down the lignin, if you make glass from used glass instead of from scratch, your furnace temperatures are lower and you're ready to pour as soon as you reach pour temperature, etc. The USEPA numbers were used to tout recycling as a way to reduce our dependence on foreign oil; although it never got a big play in the press, the numbers were acknowledged and put in play.

As the interest in global warming moved front and center at the beginning of this decade, it was a short step to convert the therms saved per ton recycled to CO2 emissions saved per ton recycled. USEPA again took the lead and in the fall of 2005, shortly after the Governor's Executive Order of June 2005 on global warming and before the legislative act, our association brought Henry Ferland, then USEPA's lead on this topic, to northern California on a speaking tour where he discussed their findings. Although for reasons I never quite understood the figure was never publicly bandied about, Mr. Ferland did a back of the envelope calculation at my request and said we would need 75-80 new power plants tomorrow if all the recycling being done in the United States that day (September, 2005) were to stop.

I then asked Henry what if we were to recycle all the materials currently being wasted, what would the emission implications of that be? He said nobody in Washington seemed to want to know the answer to that question and they hadn't figured that out. Subsequently, John Davis with the California Resource Recovery Association and Charlotte Ely, an analyst with USEPA in San Francisco, punched in the numbers, using the most recent California state data on tons of various materials found at landfills and incinerators multiplied by the CO2 emissions saved per ton recycled.

The gross number they have developed (and there's no scientific consensus on this number yet although it is not a wild or histrionic calculation) was 15.5 million tons of CO2 emissions averted each year by recycling all of the materials now being landfilled in California. If I understand your data correctly, this puts total recycling third or fourth on the list of the biggest California contributors to global warming, BUT WE FIND NO MENTION OF RECYCLING IN YOUR REPORT; indeed, the categories chosen to report emission numbers obscures the major impact that recycling can have on California emissions.

I know Mr. Davis made this point to the Integrated Waste Management Board at a public hearing in May of this year. What success he has had getting this issue out of the bowels of that organization and on to your table are not clear to me although perhaps your silence on this issue speaks for itself..

Recycling more does not involve any new technologies; what it requires is a phalanx of footsoldiers out there to do battle with wasters. Raise disposal costs, ban materials from landfills, etc.; the path is clear and simple. It has no cachet of high tech, big budget productions, but it can get the job done: one box, one bottle, one can, at a time. This is not waste conversion; it's giving the basic industries what they're all asking for, a larger supply of post-consumer materials to feed their mills, their smelters, and their factories.

Please, reconsider what you've listed in the waste reduction, recycling and resource management portion of the Industrial Section of your report. China's already adopted a "Circular Economy" to take advantage of the resource and energy savings of materials reuse; California should do no worse.

Our association is willing and able to collaborate as you request.

Respectfully submitted,

Arthur R. Boone
Education Chair
Northern California Recycling Association

NCRA – Testimony to ETAAC & CARB, 11-07.