

## Solid Waste Managers' and the Washington State Association of Counties Background on Affiliation Discussion

Starting in the fall of 2015, a group of solid waste managers from both sides of the Cascades have been chatting about finding a level of representation in Olympia that will better allow counties to fulfill the roles assigned by Chapter 70.95 RCW and other state laws. We've been frustrated that those of us responsible for preparing and implementing local solid waste plans and programs are often overshadowed or overlooked by state agencies, the Legislature, interest groups and the private sector. While we know that all groups have something to bring to the table, for the past couple of years it feels like those of us assigned "primary responsibility for solid waste management" were being invited late, or not at all.

Related to this is that as solid waste managers retire or take on other responsibilities, we risk losing both institutional memory and means for effectively communicating amongst peers.

In February and May 2016 we met with representatives of the Washington State Association of Counties (WSAC) to discuss ways that solid waste managers could better align or affiliate with WSAC to increase our voice in Olympia and formalize inter-jurisdictional communications. To date, representatives from thirty-two counties have added their support for the conversations.

### **Options Reviewed**

Our work to date has narrowed on two options.

Option 1: Similar to our colleagues the County Engineers, we could organize solid waste officials as an "independent non-profit" which has a board, collects dues from its county members, and contracts with WSAC for the services of a "managing director"

### RCW 70.95.010 (6)

(6)(a) It should be the goal of every person and business to minimize their production of wastes and to separate recyclable or hazardous materials from mixed waste.

(b) It is the responsibility of state, county, and city governments to provide for a waste management infrastructure to fully implement waste reduction and source separation strategies and to process and dispose of remaining wastes in a manner that is environmentally safe and economically sound. It is further the responsibility of state, county, and city governments to monitor the cost-effectiveness and environmental safety of combusting separated waste, processing mixed municipal solid waste, and recycling programs.

**(c) It is the responsibility of county and city governments to assume primary responsibility for solid waste management and to develop and implement aggressive and effective waste reduction and source separation strategies.**

(d) It is the responsibility of state government to ensure that local governments are providing adequate source reduction and separation opportunities and incentives to all, including persons in both rural and urban areas, and nonresidential waste generators such as commercial, industrial, and institutional entities, recognizing the need to provide flexibility to accommodate differing population densities, distances to and availability of recycling markets, and collection and disposal costs in each community; and to provide county and city governments with adequate technical resources to accomplish this responsibility.

## Participating Counties

Pat Campbell, Kitsap County

Kevin Kiernan, King County

Wendy Mifflin, Yakima County

Todd O'Brien, Adams County

Steve Wamback, Pierce County

Rory Wintersteen, Lincoln County

Matt Zybas, Snohomish County

## Representing WSAC

Eric Johnson, Executive Director

Laura Berg, Policy Director

Gary Rowe, Managing Director for  
Washington State Association of  
County Engineers (WSACE)

and associated staff/back office support. The Managing Director would facilitate the work of the organization and serve as our primary face and voice with agencies, other organizations and the Legislature.

Option 2: Instead of forming a separate organization, we could organize as a “caucus” within WSAC and established by the WSAC Board of Directors. WSAC would collect dues and assign staff to facilitate work and serve as our primary face and voice with agencies, other organizations and the Legislature.

## Path Forward

After quite a bit of discussion to clarify our needs, WSAC Executive Director Eric Johnson recommended pursuing Option 2. The seven county representatives present agreed that this is the best short-term solution, although we believe we should leave open the possibility of evolving into an independent organization particularly if we identify a want or need for full-time staff in Olympia.

## Next Steps

Based on our feedback, WSAC will prepare a draft Caucus Charter, Annual Workplan and Dues Structure that can be circulated to all 39 counties this summer. For planning purposes we are working on the assumption that our workload will require a half-time employee.

Over the summer we plan to convene regional meetings of county solid waste managers to review the drafts and reach consensus on a proposal that WSAC leadership can take to its Board of Directors in September.

After the Board forms the “Solid Waste Caucus” and assigns staff, we plan to hold our first formal meeting and elect officers in conjunction with the WSAC County Leaders Conference in Spokane scheduled for November 15 to 17.