

CRRRA 2019: The Culture of Zero Waste

August 11-14, 2019

Conference Notes

Attendees: Timothy Flanagan, Angela Goebel, Kimberle Herring

CA SB 1383, the Short-Live Climate Pollutants Act, was a focus of the conference. The panel Implementation, Creating an Edible Food Recovery Program – a How-To Guide stated that 1.2 lbs of food are wasted per meal per person. SB 1383 food recovery programs will apply to larger restaurants and businesses with 5000 square feet or 250 seats or more. Closing Plenary Speaker Calla Rose B. Ostrander emphasized the importance of building compost markets with farmers statewide as an outlet for the organics processed, as well as a solution to address climate change by sinking carbon into soil.

Recycling Challenges were identified and discussed. Scott Smithline, Director of CalRecycle, referenced the 280 RePlanet buyback centers that just closed statewide, which are directly related to the problems in California Redemption Value program that need to be addressed. He also said that on this 50th anniversary of the passage of AB9393, we need more modern, meaningful definitions of recycling and recyclable. The panel Statewide Dialogue: Recycling Crisis in California noted that the cost of processing is directly related to the quality of the material and producer responsibility needs to help cover the cost of recycling. AB972 will require 75% recycled content for all beverage containers (which helps build markets for recycled material). At National Sword and the Connection between Contamination and End Markets, Dr. Lisa Skumatz said that when Gresham's Law applied: bad bales drive out good bales. There is no reward for high quality and no enforcement; it's a race to the bottom. Susan Collins, from the Container Recycling Institute, presented preliminary findings of US aluminum recycling and processing. Aluminum can design and processing inefficiency lead to a \$.9 billion-dollar economic loss in wasted aluminum every year. The District's Materials Recovery Facility operations continues to look at how to improve efficiency so that all recycled materials are sent to end markets.

Policy, collection, outreach and processing solutions to address recycling challenges were identified. At Changing Times, Diverse Populations: Research and Outreach for Today's Recycling Challenges panel, marketing firm Gigantic Ideas recommended launching campaigns with local relevance (highlight commonly found issues), establishing clear expectations (aligning city and hauler messaging), defining desired actions (pour, wipe, scrape), and adapting to culturally/languages if needed. Case studies in upcycling; how to create reuse, repair and redistribution opportunities in your community looked beyond recycling and went up the hierarchy to highlight programs in Alameda programs, including Medshare (a program to reuse medical supplies and equipment) as a resource for local hospitals and clinics, local reuse grants, GoBox and Vessle refillable food service ware, and Filljoy Bulky shopping software kiosk. Last Chance Mercantile may look into applying for funding from CalRecycle's Reuse Pilot grant.

The Next Generational Foodware Policies panel demonstrated how cities across the state, including Berkeley, Alameda and San Francisco are reducing single use plastics with ordinances promoting reusables, recyclables and compostables. Miriam Gordon from the NGO UPSTEAM stated that 14 of the top 20 plastic items littered is from food packaging, and it makes up 30% of municipal solid waste. They are also developing a toolkit for ordinances, which can serve as examples for local jurisdictions, as cities like Pacific Grove, Seaside and Del Rey Oaks develop ordinances, following the examples of Carmel and Monterey.