

Compostable Products Advisory Committee Meeting Summary

Meeting #2: Tuesday November 7, 2023 | 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

Location: Zoom

Attendance

Members of the Advisory Council, Washington Department of Ecology (Ecology), Cascadia Consulting Group (Cascadia), and the public attended the meeting.

24 out of 26 Advisory Committee members attended:

Name	Affiliation
Alex Truelove	BPI
Amy Clow	WSDA
Patti Stacey	Kittitas County
Chris Averyt	City of Spokane
Dan Corum	City of Tacoma
Gena Jain	City of Kirkland
Heather Trim	Zero Waste Washington
Janet Thoman	CMA
Jay Blazey	Cedar Grove
Jenny Slepian	Eco Products
Kate Kurtz	City of Seattle
Liv Johansson	WORC
Lewis Griffith	City of Tacoma
Ryan Dicks	Pierce County

Name	Affiliation
Mark Chidester	City of Richland
Reingard Rieger	Tilth Alliance
Ron Jones	City of Olympia
Samantha Louderback	Washington Hospitality Association
Samantha Winkle	Silver Springs
Scott Deatherage	Barr-Tech
Shannon Pinc	NatureWorks
Alli Kingfisher	Ecology
Wendy Weiker	Republic Services
Peter Godlewski	Association of WA Businesses
Zonell Tateishi	Yakima County
Rod Whittaker	WRRRA

3 Washington Department of Ecology (Ecology) members attended, but did not participate as Advisory Committee members:

- Mary Harrington
- Chery Sullivan
- Cullen Naumoff

4 staff from Cascadia Consulting Group (Cascadia) attended as meeting facilitators and support:

- Maddie Seibert
- Hannah Swee
- Taylor Magee
- Brent Edgar

3 members of the public attended.

Meeting goals

- Discuss operating procedures.
- Decide on a working definition for compostable products.
- Continue to shape a shared vision.
- Vet proposed workplan and research plan.

Agenda

Duration	Agenda Item
15 min	Welcome, agenda, & objectives
15 min	Discuss Draft Operating Procedures
25 min	Reach a working definition for compostable products
40 min	Vet proposed workplan and research plan
10 min	Public comment
10 min	Closing remarks and preview next steps

Welcome and Introductions

Maddie began the meeting and welcomed Advisory Committee members. She presented Zoom tips and best practices for the meeting, took attendance, went over the meeting agenda and community agreements, reviewed ways for community members/ members of the public to engage with the Advisory Committee both inside and outside the meeting, and addressed technology tips and a guide using MURAL, the interactive discussion tool used during the meeting.

Discuss Draft Operating Procedures

The group transitioned to MURAL, where Advisory Committee members participated in conversations about the Draft Operating Procedures. Regarding each section, Advisory Committee members were asked: **What questions, comments, or suggested changes do you have?** Below are key themes, paraphrased from individual comments:

Advisory Committee Roles and Responsibilities

- Will Committee members who miss meetings have an opportunity to weigh in on consensus-based recommendations?
 - Maddie replied that meetings will be the primary area for decision making. There will also be space to review the draft plan outside of these meetings.
- Members voiced support for the idea of identifying proxies attend meetings when Advisory Committee members can't attend to help ensure all viewpoints are heard.
 - Maddie replied to members saying that the Draft Operating Procedures do not currently outline proxy procedures, but we can look into that.

Draft Community Agreements

- Make space for all voices to avoid one person dominating the conversation.
 - Maddie suggested: "if you find yourself in a speaking role for much of the meeting, step back into a listening role and allow room for others to speak".
- If you disagree with something, bring forward an idea or language that you prefer or believe fits better.

- Stay on topic, or answer the specific question/ topic being discussed.
- Provide data or information to support statements and ideas rather than anecdotal statements.

Decision Making Framework

- Participants suggested replacing the word “veto” with something else.
 - Maddie suggested we replaced “veto” with “do not support” which showcases individual opinion, without alluding to the notion of requiring 100% consensus on votes.
- Will this voting scale be used as a group measure or individual?
 - Maddie replied that voting will be done as individuals.
- Some organizations have more than one representative; will votes be per organization or per member?
 - Maddie replied that the Advisory Committee was designed based off the legislation and members are distributed among the categories defined in the legislation.
- Additional questions or comments:
 - Minority votes will be noted/ reflected
 - I'm confused as to why there are two representatives listed from City of Tacoma and two from City of Richland on this Advisory Committee.

Reach a Working Definition for Compostable Products

The following proposed working definition for compostable products is already encompassed in Washington state law (RCW 70A.455.040 Requirements for a product labeled "compostable"):

- 1) A product labeled as "compostable" that is sold, offered for sale, or distributed for use in Washington by a producer must:
 - a) Meet ASTM standard specification D6400;
 - b) Meet ASTM standard specification D6868; or
 - c) Be comprised of wood, which includes renewable wood, or fiber-based substrate only.
- 2) A product described in subsection (1)(a) or (b) of this section must:
 - a) Meet labeling requirements established under the United States federal trade commission's guides; and
 - b) Feature labeling that:
 - i) Meets industry standards for being distinguishable upon quick inspection in both public sorting areas and in processing facilities;
 - ii) Uses a logo indicating the product has been certified by a recognized third-party independent verification body as meeting the ASTM standard specification;
 - iii) Displays the word "compostable," where possible, indicating the product has been tested by a recognized third-party independent body and meets the ASTM standard specification; and
 - iv) Uses green, beige, or brown labeling, color striping, or other green, beige, or brown symbols, colors, tinting, marks, or design patterns that help differentiate compostable items from noncompostable items.

Advisory Committee members were asked: **How well does this definition guide us toward the goals of this process? Can we agree on this shared definition as part of our process?**

Comments are below, sorted into main themes:

- Overarching comments:

- The mandate is: The Advisory Committee shall make recommendations to the appropriate committees of the legislature on the development of standards for the management of compostable products, especially food service products, by composting and other organic materials management facilities.
- General support for the definition, although it may require some adjustments to better fit the Committee's needs.
- The definition focuses too heavily on labeling:
 - The provided definition seems to focus more on labeling laws and requirements in WA as opposed to defining compostable products and what those entail.
 - This definition is more focused on labeling and that we need to look at how WA would like products that are called compostable to be labeled.
- The definition adequately reflects potentially compostable items in WA state:
 - The end goal is that when any of these products end up at a compost facility, we want them to feel confident that what they are receiving is considered to be compostable in Washington, and the labelling requirement here does a great job of that.
 - Compostability does not mean an item is compostable in every facility and that the definition should be broad and demonstrate an item is theoretically compostable in all facilities.
- The definition should better acknowledge different technologies in WA state:
 - This definition is meant to serve compostable products management in WA, and therefore the definition should reflect technologies and systems in WA.
 - There are composters who struggle with fiber, but do fine with PLA and vice versa.
 - The proposed definition seems to come from a composter perspective; when creating our working definition we must consider all perspectives including the consumer, composter, and packaging producers.
 - Because not all technology and processing times are standard across facilities, language in the definition should provide some base level that the product is compostable at all facilities.
- The definition should be designed to align different perspectives in WA state:
 - Defining compostability differently is a large part of the problem, and we need to discuss aspects of composability and create a definition we can collectively work with.
 - Need to establish a definition that satisfies consumers, composters, and manufacturers.
 - We need to standardize our compostable products definition to reduce consumer confusion.
- Multiple definitions may be helpful:
 - Establishing multiple definitions would be helpful (ex. for plastic-like, paper, paperboard, molded fiber, etc.).
 - There should be a clear and broad definition while defining home vs. industrial composting.
 - (1) (c) causes confusion and clouds the actual standards.
 - Doesn't D6400, D6868, and wood/fiber cover all products with the exception of home compostability? I would suggest that home compostable products should also adhere to commercial requirements as well.
- More clarity is needed around the standard specifications:

- It could be helpful to go through the standard specifications to understand if there is anything missing that is a major concern, such as risk of nano or micro plastics.

Vet Proposed Workplan and Research Questions and Methods

Workplan

Maddie introduced the proposed workplan and timeline, with Hannah adding some additional information. The Committee then answered: **Do the timeline and decision points make sense?**

Below are key points from this activity:

- What if we fall behind schedule?
 - Maddie replied that this will be covered more in the research plan, but it may require more offline conversations in the case the Committee falls behind.
- Are workgroups needed for these topics?
- Are we able to add additional meetings if needed?
 - Yes.
- Questions about research, covered in next section.

Research Questions

Hannah introduced the proposed research questions from HB 1033. The Committee members were then asked two sets of questions. The questions and associated comments from the Committee are below:

For any of the topics listed above, what should the research team pay particular attention to? Where do you want the research to focus?

- Clean and marketable should be defined.
- Will there be compensation for facilities that lose their organic registration by accepting compostable products?
- How can we keep compost marketable with the different systems?
- What are the cost or capacity impacts for composting facilities accepting compostable products?
- Ensuring consumer confusion is a priority.
- It will be difficult to address goal (a) "managing organic materials in an environmentally sustainable way that ensures finished compost is clean and marketable" without surveying/consulting Washington's composting facilities about what items they can accept and truly "compost" at their facilities, and using that data in a meaningful way.
- Will there be support for facilities who need to procure additional equipment to sort/ screen out contamination?
- Separate commercial and at-home composting for compostable products.
- Funding for enforcement
- What is a reasonable amount of plastic (micro/nano) is any?
- Upstream contamination reduction strategies.
- What are existing local laws surrounding compostable products and how might they be affected by legislation?
- Consider actions taken in CA for accepting compostable products.

What is missing from the required research questions? For any topics you suggest, consider: how will this help us achieve the goals of the Advisory Committee's work? Can it be completed in the timeline available?

- What is the current landscape in WA facilities that accept food waste?
- Negative impacts of non-compostable substitute products.
- What are the contamination issues associated with accepted compostable products?
- Standards for compost facility practices- how do we set targets?
- How to address non-compostable look-alikes?
- Programs in other states and the success and barriers faced there (this comment received 5 “thumbs up” on MURAL)
- GHG analysis of composting process.
- WA Toxics in Packaging- Safer Alternative Law & reports.
- Clear understanding of ASTM standards and other standards in the world.
- Research on the acceptance of compostables and rates of contamination
- What are the impacts of compostable products on other types of organics processing technologies such as AD?
- Financial incentives for OMM facilities accepting compostable products.
- LCA comparison between single use plastic packaging landfilled, single use plastic packaging recycled, compostable packaging landfilled, and compostable packaging composted.
- Suggestion to group categories based off the types of recommendation the Committee is making. Example: banning types of products, incentivizing facilities to take more products.
- The research questions should look into the larger issues of composting, which will then shape a realistic policy.

Research Plan

Hannah went over the research plan with the Committee and highlighted key points of engagement with the Advisory Committee members. Questions with Committee members' responses are listed below:

Are there any key reports or studies that should be referenced in the literature review that are not currently identified?

- EU's policy framework.
- WA food packaging
- Any action taken in CA.
- Look at other states policies and stakeholder groups, and success/ challenges there.

Are there any subject matter experts that you would like to be specifically identified to be interviewed? If so, who and which topics?

- Planners in San Francisco
- Those who helped develop ASTM standards.
- Team at A1 Organics in Denver, CO about their processes.
- Experts on PFAS and PFAS testing.
- City of Minneapolis on managing contamination.

Do you have any additional input on these research questions?

- What does scientific literature say about ideal composting conditions?
- Disintegration rates of compostable products.
- Nan and micro plastic byproducts testing.
- Understand if compost with fake plastic compostables is selling.
- Do other states use visuals (labeling) that are clear to consumers?
- Look at policies holistically and understand challenges and successes once implemented.
- Understand that not all policies are applicable to WA, biases in different geographic locations.
- The state should independently look at PFAs and how these are treated.

Public Comment

No public comments.

Next Steps and Action Items

- We will send out a poll to reschedule the January 2 meeting.
- Next meeting: December 5th
 - Finalize operating procedures
 - Review existing literature and identify gaps in information and topics that need further research.
 - Outline initial information requests.
 - Begin to understand gaps between the current system and the desired future system.