ASTSWMO Recycling Position Paper

Cathy Jamieson, VT DEC and

Chair, ASTSWMO Materials Management Subcommittee

Annual Meeting 2020

ASTSWMO

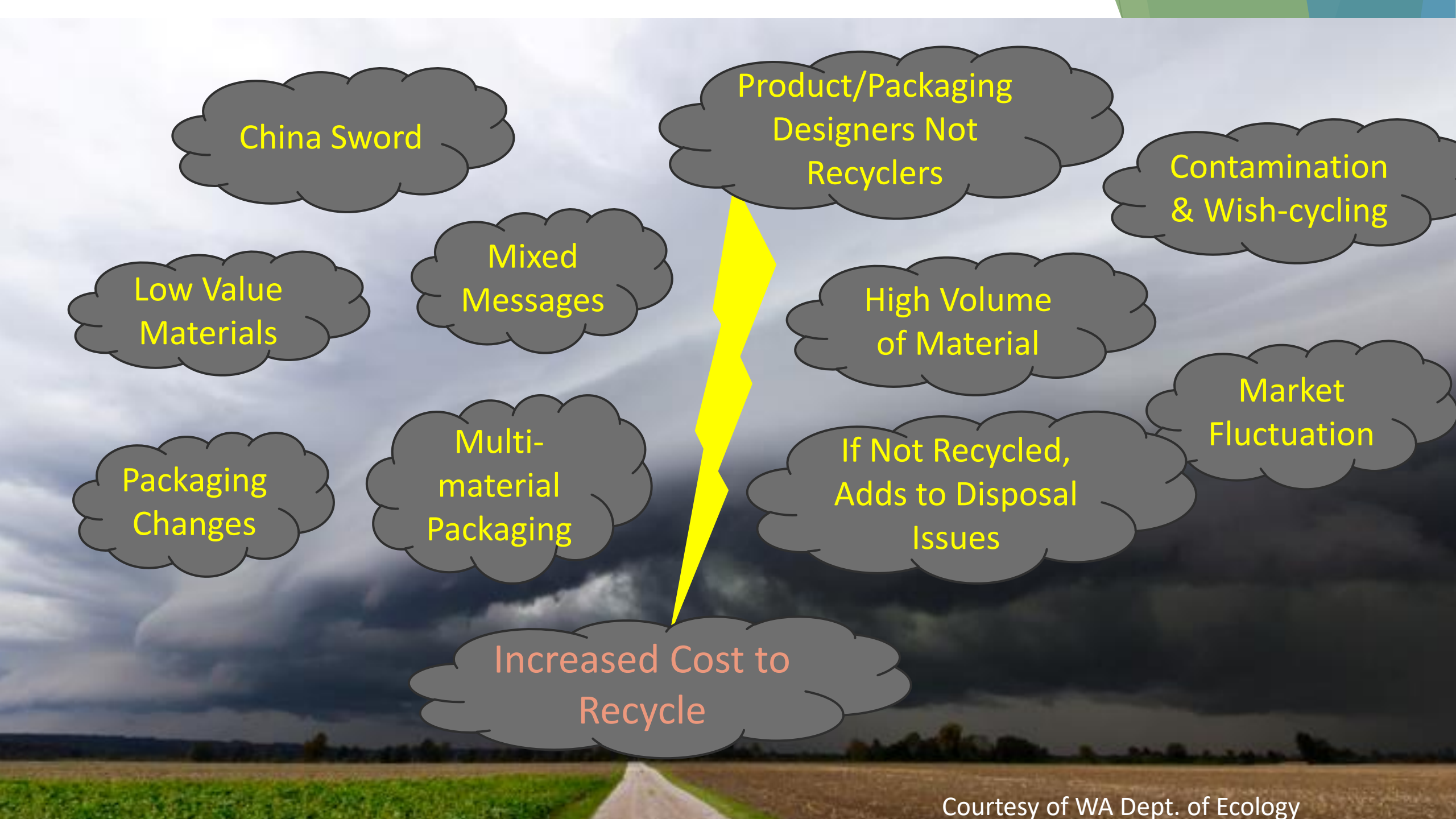
- Represents all States, Territories, and District of Columbia on Solid Waste Issues
- Communicates frequently with EPA and others
- ASTSWMO Board unanimously approved position paper in July 2020, then sent it to EPA

Link:

http://astswmo.org/astswmo-recycling-position-paper/

Stresses on Current Recycling System

- **Export Markets** dramatically changed
  - Insufficient domestic markets
  - Market fluctuations
  - Drop in material value
- **Type of materials** used in packaging changing
- **Increase** in packaging and single use products
- **Confusion** with what is recyclable
  - Wishcycling, Contamination



Courtesy of WA Dept. of Ecology

Status Quo Not Sustainable
Recycling Is at a Crossroads

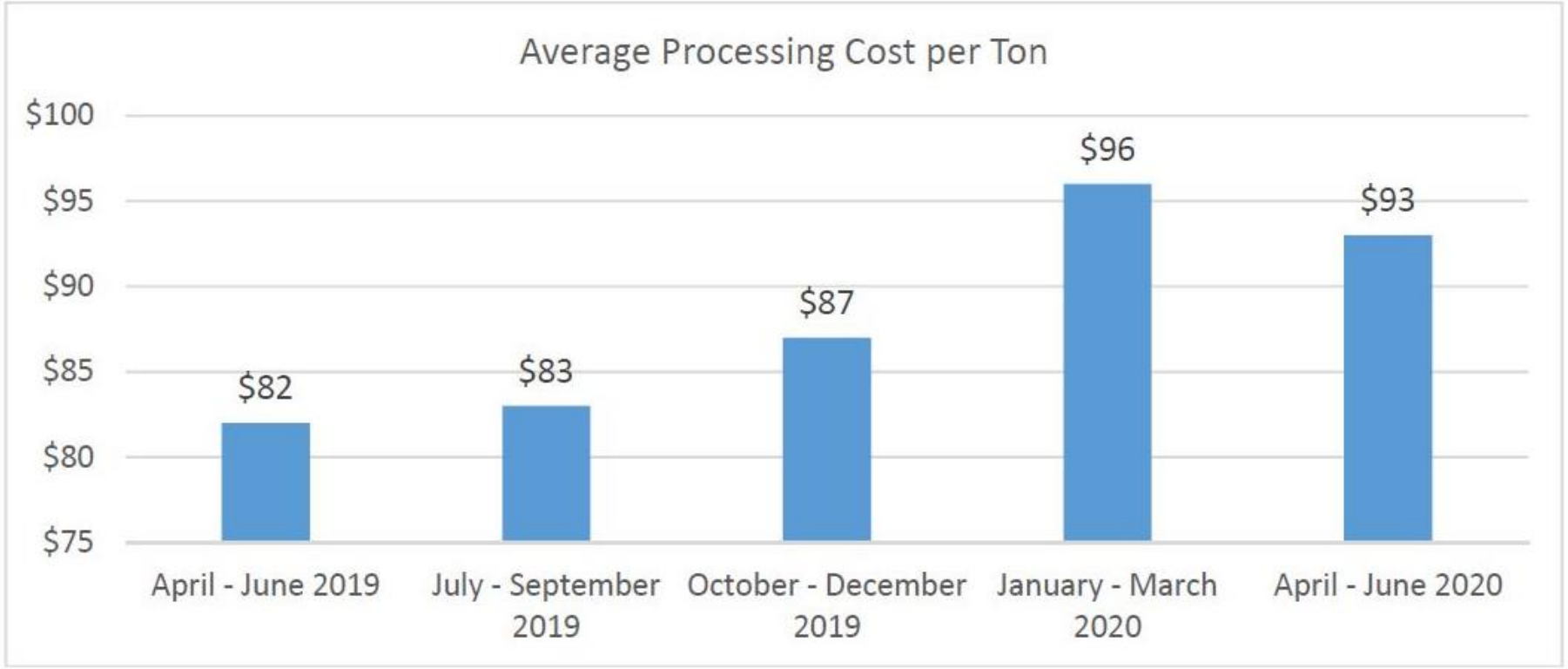
- High Costs
- Municipalities / consumers
  - Have no control over types of materials used
- Virgin materials, often subsidized, are cheaper than recyclables
- Some question value of recycling

NERC MRF Survey – Commodity Value

https://nerc.org/documents/NERC-Report-on-Blended-MRF-Values-in-the-Northeast-August-2020.pdf

NERC MRF Survey – Processing Costs

https://nerc.org/documents/NERC-Report-on-Blended-MRF-Values-in-the-Northeast-August-2020.pdf



Note: Processing costs are much greater than commodity value.
Does not include costs to collect and transport recyclables to the MRF.

Union-Bulletin

College Place City Council puts brakes on recycling

Andy Porter Mar 28, 2018 Updated Mar 28, 2018

COLLEGE PLACE — Due to markets for recyclable materials becoming unsustainable, the City Council Tuesday voted to suspend its recycling program.

After discussing the issue, Councilman Loren Peterson made the motion "to suspend curbside recycling until such time as the market prices make the cost of recycling affordable."

"I'll make my saddest second ever," said Councilman Michael Cleveland. "This is really disappointing but this is the way it is ..."

Photo from Natural Resources Council of Maine

Birmingham Real-Time News

Avondale recycling drop-off center closing forever in December

Posted Nov 28, 2018

AL Your role in news and our state's future.

The News-Review

BREAKING

Updated: Douglas County landfill suspends recycling as Chinese recyclable market dries up

CARISA CEGAVSKE The News-Review May 24, 2018 15

WASTEDIVE Deep Dive Opinion Library Events Topics

BRIEF

China ban prompts Oregon county to suspend recycling program

BWingYZ

Contamination

Photo from Waste Dive

Photo from SIMS

Benefits of Recycling

Environmental

- Saves energy, reduces GHGe
- Conserves natural resources
- Pollution prevention
- Reduce need for disposal

Economic

- Jobs, jobs, more jobs
- Inputs to manufacturing

Challenges -- using EPA's categories

Enhance MM Infrastructure

Strengthen Secondary Materials Markets

Promote Education and Outreach

Enhance Measurement

Enhance MM Infrastructure

A. Existing Infrastructure Improvements needed

B. Additional infrastructure needed to meet domestic market standards

C. Upstream solutions need to be explored

Q: Who will make investments?

Strengthen Secondary Markets

- Domestic Markets need to be further developed
  - Can no longer depend on exports
  - Need assessment of existing / proposed capacity for recyclable materials
- Manufacturing with post-consumer recycled content can help with markets
- Global markets could be used for further processed materials, like pulp, plastic flakes

Promote Education and Outreach

- Confusion, Frustration – users need help
- Campaigns are costly, local govts can't go it alone
- Need improved and more consistent labeling

Enhance Measurement

- Assessment of types and quantity of materials

  Not all states report to EPA

- Consistency is needed for definitions, reporting

- Track where materials are sent

Strategies Considered by States
Upstream Options

- Ban from sale, single use products, plastics
- Mandate post-consumer recycled content
- Consider expanding “bottle bill” redemption programs
- EPR models for packaging, paper, and printed materials

Position

- Recommends EPA considers proposing substantial change when developing the National Recycling Strategy

- Recommends National Recycling Strategy includes:
  - Outline infrastructure improvements needed and a plan for **who will make the investments**
  - A plan to develop needed capacity & improvement of domestic markets
  - A plan to assist State and local govts to reduce contamination
  - How tracking and reporting will be done more consistently
  - How economics of recycling will be sustainable, addressing current costs to cities/taxpayers and low market value of materials

ASSOCIATION OF STATE AND TERRITORIAL SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT OFFICIALS

Thank You

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