A NATIONAL WASTE MANAGEMENT POLICY FOR THE UNITED STATES?

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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Figure ES-9. Management of MSW in the United States, 2013
254 Million Tons

- Discarded: 52.8%
- Recovery: 34.3%
- Combustion with Energy Recovery: 12.9%
EPA Waste Hierarchy

Waste Management Hierarchy

1. Source Reduction & Reuse
2. Recycling / Composting
3. Energy Recovery
4. Treatment & Disposal

Most Preferred
Least Preferred
Figure 2. Interstate Waste Movements 2003

Note: Waste imports to and exports from Washington, DC are not shown.
• Federal/State regulatory system in United States
  – 50 states, often with different rules

• Traditional state/local governmental function
  – according to the courts

• Federal law (RCRA) confirms state/local authority
  – States/cities increasing recycling goals
National Waste Policy?

- America doesn’t even have a national recycling goal
- Private and public sectors have made major investments in current structure/system
- SWANA’s official policy supports “integrated waste management” at the local level – let local gov’ts decide what is best
- Would require RCRA to be amended
  – Congress doesn’t agree on anything
Some Potential Signs of Hope

U.S. is moving slowly towards Sustainable Material Management and the Circular Economy

EPA/USDA Food Waste Goal – 50% by 2030
- First federal policy goal re diversion
- Congressional hearings have taken place

Focus on GHG Emissions May Require Nationwide Rules

Frustration with patchwork approach to solid waste regulation
Product Stewardship/EPR

Product Categories
- Appliances Containing Refrigerants
- Auto Switches
- Batteries
- Carpet
- Cell Phones
- Electronics
- Fluorescent Lighting
- Mattresses
- Mercury Thermostats
- Paint
- Pesticide Containers
- Pharmaceuticals

Number of State EPR Laws
- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9

States with local law(s)

* Other laws authorizing agencies to require EPR, including Framework laws
Things to Watch For

• A national waste policy probably requires D’s to control White House and Congress
  – EPA may not have authority to issue

• Likely to be driven by recycling/diversion, not energy recovery

• Local events could increase interest
  – NYC/Fresh Kills 1997-2005
  – Love Canal led to Superfund
  – Garbage Barge -- Recycling
Conclusions

• Unlikely to have national waste policy soon
• Some trends provide basis for hope
• Terrific opportunity to compare European and American model at ISWA World Congress in Baltimore on Sept 25-27, 2017.
Questions?

Thank you!

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