



# Oregon

John A. Kitzhaber, MD, Governor

## Department of Environmental Quality

Land Quality Division

811 SW Sixth Avenue  
Portland, OR 97204-1390

(503) 229-5696

FAX (503) 229-6977

TTY 711

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SUBMITTED BY: Peter Spindelow

Testimony of Peter Spindelow, DEQ Solid Waste Policy Analyst  
SCR 208 Honoring Steve Apotheker  
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Steve Apotheker and I worked closely together for many years on many projects. DEQ's Commingled Recycling Sorting study was strongly influenced by Steve's previous work on this subject. Steve helped us plan, and Metro helped fund, several Oregon Waste Composition studies which included a number of Metro-specific data projects. Steve made good use of the studies too. Frequently he would ask me for specific analyses of the data in order to better inform policy and operational decisions Metro was making. Steve also served on the Oregon Bottle Bill Task Force in 2008 - a task force for which I provided much data and analyses.

I want to highlight two of Steve's greatest strengths. First, Steve really let his views be guided by his analysis. Often people bend their analyses to back up their prior views, but that was not the case with Steve. Second, while Steve had great things to tell and show us, he also fully listened and to and learned from others - even those who disagreed with him. For Steve, it was not "us versus them" - it was "let's figure this out together."

But if Steve were here, he wouldn't want us to spend time just reviewing what a great person he was. He'd want us to use this time to advance and debate ideas on how we can make Oregon a more sustainable place for us all to live. In 2009, as Steve's health was declining, he took time out to write a paper called *Moving Towards Sustainability*, which was published in two part in the January and February 2010 issues of *Resource Recycling Magazine*. Steve made 4 key points in this article, and I'd like to take my remaining time to review these four points with you. These are Steve's views, not necessarily DEQ's.

Steve's first point is that we need to restore credibility to recycling. Recycling provides large environmental benefits, but only when it replaces the harvesting of virgin resources to manufacture materials, and the energy use that involves. Simple diversion - using a material in some low-valued use such as in road beds - may keep materials out of landfills but provides little environmental benefit. Collecting material but not properly sorting it to send to proper markets also wastes materials and reduces environmental benefits. Finally, Steve believed that we should put our emphasis on a true recycling rate not including energy recovery.

Second, Steve asks us to change our model from our current voluntary recycling system to a stewardship model. The stewardship model would have manufacturers of products be responsible for making their products reusable or recyclable, energy efficient, and non-toxic and ensure that a system exists to recycle or reuse them. State and local government's role would be to establish performance standards for the products and for recovery system developed under the stewardship model, and the expectations for

participants. Consumers too would have responsibilities - for recycling or properly managing products at the end of their useful life.

Third, we should manage resources, not just discards. Much energy and resources go into making products that do not end up in landfills, or that may take years to get to the landfill. The food we eat, the wastes that enter our sewage treatment systems, most of the resources that go into making buildings - these things for the most part do not show up in our landfill - at least not for many years in the case of long-lived products like buildings. Yet it takes significant energy and resources to manufacture these items, and it is the harvesting of virgin materials and energy sources for their production that creates much of the environmental damage.

Fourth, we need to attain a sustainable level of resource use, consuming no more than our "fair share" of the world's resources and providing that same quantity of resources to future generations. The Global Footprint Network estimates that the average American's footprint was 23.2 acres in 2005. This means that for each individual American, it would take an average of 23.2 acres to sustainably produce the goods and foods we consume, plus absorb the carbon dioxide we generate through our transportation, home heating, and other uses of fuels. Yet on a worldwide basis, the amount of productive land available per person is only 5.2 acres. If everyone in the world lived like Americans did in 2005, we would need 4.5 Earths to sustainably produce our goods and absorb our wastes. Of course, we only have one Earth. Steve article then goes on to discuss how the Natural Step Framework can be used for us to develop a vision of what a sustainable world can be like in the future. That same framework can then be used to "backcast" - to determine a path to achieve that vision of sustainability.

I heard that Steve was disappointed that his articles did not seem to generate much discussion. I want to let Diane and Jesse know though that we did hear Steve, and his work has influenced us at DEQ, as well as the solid waste and recycling community in Oregon in general.

As mandated by the Oregon legislature, DEQ is currently working to update our statewide solid waste management plan as our old plan is now out-of-date. In doing so though, we are concentrating on addressing the impacts of over their full life cycle - materials management - rather than just managing discards. That is in keeping with Steve's third point. Plus, we are using the Natural Step Framework - a process that has had strong DEQ support for years - to develop a vision of sustainable materials management in the year 2050, and then to backcast to find possible paths to achieve that vision. But what I think would make Steve smile the most, and what made me smile when I recently went back and re-read Steve's paper, is the key sentence in our draft Vision for sustainable materials management in 2050. That sentence reads: "Recognizing that Earth's resources are finite, Oregonians live within the limits of our sustainable share of the world's natural resources." That is the vision DEQ has posted for public comment on our web site right now. From his article, that clearly is a vision that Steve was eager to discuss too.