

Concerning the Oregon Paint Care Program

I have two concerns about this program, initiated under HB3037.

First, let's consider the justification for the program, that is, to reduce the amount of Hazardous Household Waste entering our landfills.

After latex paint (the overwhelming majority of the problem) is manufactured, it's shipped to stores by common carrier, where it's opened and tinted by clerks with (typically) absolutely no HazMat training. Then it's sold to average citizens with no HazMat experience, who put it in a car with their children, take it home and spread it all over the inside and outside of their houses, including the rooms of their growing children. Then they put the remainder in their cars and transport it to a PaintCare drop-off facility, where it's accepted by a clerk with minimal HazMat training and placed in a large plastic bin.

At that point, it seems to become hazardous waste which can only be transported by a licensed Hazardous Waste Hauler, who takes it to the Swan Island facility, where it's sorted, filtered, color matched and packaged. After packaging ...something... happens, the paint is no longer a hazardous waste and may be again handled by ordinary people.

Paint laden waste water from the Swan Island plant is actually trucked to Arlington and pumped into the landfill as a bio-degradation enhancer.

Second, let's consider economics. The accepted figure for paint available for recycling through this program is 10%. Given the \$0.75 fee for gallons and the \$1.60 fee for fivers, \$0.60/gallon is a reasonable average per gallon fee. Thus, each gallon available for recycling has cost Oregonians \$6.00 in fees.

Assuming that half the paint collected can actually be recycled and sold, for about \$8.00/gallon, each gallon could contribute about \$4.00 to the program. (That's retail- perhaps \$2.00 wholesale.) This money comes from the Swan Island processing facility but it's not clear where it ends up. It doesn't seem to be used to defray the expenses of the Paint Care program. I've heard the plant is not economically self-sufficient and expenses were defrayed by Metro in the past, which may have been one of the justifications for HB3037.

The Big Boxes sell Homax paint hardener for \$1.98, good for 2/3 gallon or \$3.00 for a whole gallon, a difference of \$3.00/gallon. One imagines that Homax could be persuaded to reduce the price based on large volume sales. I'm told that ordinary kitty litter is just as effective, cheaper and more readily available.

The DEQ PaintCare site hypothesizes that this program will result in "proper" management of over 800,000 gallons of leftover paint each year, which, using the 10% waste factor, implies 8 million gallons of architectural paint sold in Oregon each year. Using my \$0.60/gallon assumption, that means the PaintCare program takes in over \$4.5 million annually.

So, we have a program that costs Oregon taxpayers \$4.5 million to manage a problem that doesn't seem to exist. I'm very much in favor of all recycling efforts, but they must make economic and environmental sense. I am unable to perceive any particular benefit from this program, except for those who are employed by it. Therefore I must recommend that it be allowed to sunset in 2014, as provided by the Legislature.

Bob Fankhauser  
503 206 9824 [blueboxconst@hevanet.com](mailto:blueboxconst@hevanet.com)