

**State of Mississippi
Task Force on Recycling
August 23, 2006
Meeting Minutes**

Attending Task Force Members

Barbara Dorr
Phil Morris
Nick Wilson
Russell Bennett

Joel Yelverton
Vernon Hartley
Renee Howell

Kathy Avis
Richard Harrell
Butch Meredith

MDA Staff

Kenneth Calvin
Bob Lord

MDEQ Staff

Jerry Cain
Mark Williams
John David Burns

Mark Williams called the meeting to order. Chairman Phil Morris welcomed the Task Force members and briefly talked about the previous work and the task ahead. He was followed by Jerry Cain, Director of the Office of Pollution Control who welcomed the Task Force members and voiced the support from MDEQ of the Task Force efforts. Mr. Cain noted that a report is due by December 31, 2006 to the Legislature, and that the MS Development Authority would lead in the development of the report as per the requirements of current law. MDEQ would continue its role of providing administrative support to the Task Force. Resignations from the Task Force were reviewed; new members acknowledged; and introductions of those Task Force members present were conducted. It was pointed out that nine Task Force members were not present. A list of Task Force members was made available to attendees who were asked to review their contact information and note any changes or corrections that needed to be made.

The report from the previous Task Force effort was reviewed. During this review, it was pointed out that all minutes and a final, complete version of that report is available on the Task Force web page on the MDEQ website. A summarized, condensed version of this report, along with the recommendations of the Task Force to the Legislature was distributed to all attending members.

Mark Williams then led a discussion and review of the new recycling legislation that was enacted in the 2006 Legislative Session. Under this new law, the 2006 Task Force is tasked with building and expounding on its previous recommendations related to recycling market development. A copy of the current law, House Bill 896, as well as a summary of pertinent points of the law was distributed to all attendees. It was pointed out that the new legislative requirements related to recycling were added to the legislation that was adopted regarding the determination of need for new and expanded solid waste management facilities. It was discussed that the law requires the 2006 Task Force report to focus on assessing the recycling industry, the existing markets in recycling and the need for new markets. Additionally, recommendations for establishing those markets and attracting recycling businesses that utilize the materials collected should be discussed.

A requirement that the Department of Education update its “waste reduction” curriculum with the advice of MDEQ was also discussed. Barbara Dorr pointed out that a waste minimization and recycling curriculum for elementary and secondary schools has already been developed and is available to the MS Department of Education. John David Burns also indicated that that type of information is included in the current curriculum at this time but is rarely reviewed because it is not included in the state test. He indicated that his understanding was that because of various constraints, teachers, as a necessity, teach for the test and therefore rarely touch on recycling and waste minimization.

It was determined during discussions that the content and format of this 2006 report should be decided in the initial phases of this Task Force as opposed to going through an information collecting phase first as the Task Force did in 2004. Deciding on the content and format of the report early in the process will better focus research and other efforts necessary for this report. There was also a discussion on a number of sources available to help with the necessary research, including Recycling Directories as listed on the MDEQ website, as well as numerous regional recycling groups and coalitions in the southeast. Discussion also indicated that there are industries and companies, such as Alcoa, that can be helpful in researching the information needed.

The Task Force then entered into a discussion of the specific goals and contents that the group wanted the 2006 report to contain or address. It was suggested that information on the markets that are available be addressed so that local governments will have a resource to assist in marketing their recyclables. If they have information to help in marketing their recyclables and can make it profitable, then more local governments will likely participate. It was also pointed out that many of the things needed to promote or grow recycling will likely require additional resources and staff for new and expanded programs. Such additional resources may need to be addressed by the state Legislature. The discussion indicated that the report needed to address these resource issues as the Legislature may be reluctant to provide additional funding to recycling activities unless they can be proven to be economically advantageous. Therefore, it was agreed that the report needed address and demonstrate the economic impacts and benefits of recycling. It was also discussed that education or outreach effort would be needed to help show where the markets and raw materials were available so that recycling programs can be successful. Also discussed were issues of transportation of recyclables to and from markets. Another issue brought up was the potential for offering tax credits or financial incentives to industries that utilize recyclable materials in their process to entice them to relocate inside the state. Also discussed were ways to encourage and increase recycling from citizens by potentially offering them economic benefits and savings on their garbage collection fees. It was agreed that the Task Force report needed to address possible financial incentives that could be made available to grow recycling. Richard Harrell suggested that local governments should consider a full-cost accounting and comparison of disposal versus recycling. Mark Williams pointed out that while recycling may not pay for itself that it provided some economic return where disposal in landfill did not.

To further the discussion on the economic impact of recycling, attendees were provided with a copy of excerpts from an economic impact report compiled by South Carolina on the recycling industry in that state. It was pointed out that South Carolina is somewhat similar to Mississippi demographically and is also a southeastern state. A summary of the results of South Carolina’s study painted a positive picture of the economic impact that recycling can have. It was discussed that this information might be the type of information that the state legislature should be provided. Kenneth Calvin indicated that this report might be something that the State Economist with IHL could generate to support the Task Force’s report efforts. The 2006 Task Force report

should include examples of successes, as well as failures, and reasons why one local recycling program may be successful as opposed to another program that is struggling.

In addition there was a discussion on the need for a state survey of the recycling industry and other research efforts. Mark Williams pointed out that the new law also required MDEQ to develop a broader assessment report of the status of recycling in the state. It was agreed that a state survey should consolidate information for both the Task Force report and the MDEQ report so that industry did not receive multiple versions of or have to respond to similar surveys.

There was also discussion on residential recycling and recycling within government offices, as well as industry, but the Task Force agreed that while these issues may need to be mentioned, the overall focus of the report was to assess the status of the “industry” and how to develop the business of recycling. Collection and processing would have some part in that also. For example it was pointed out that increased collection from residents, government offices, and industry can help encourage further development of recycling markets. Also, the availability of recycling markets can further encourage increases in recycling from residents, government offices, and industry.

Renee Howell stressed that local support for the program is vital to success. If many programs can see the cost avoidance associated with recycling, that activity would be more attractive. The markets are available for recyclables. It often takes one point of contact or one coordinator locally to make a recycling program successful. Joel Yelverton pointed out that many local governments have a waste collection and disposal contract that covers collection all the way through disposal, and therefore, there is no cost avoidance for the local government if recyclables are diverted from the waste stream.

The Task Force also had additional discussion on the portion of the report that would address the “recyclable materials markets” in the state. The Task Force agreed that the major markets should be identified as it applies to metals, glass, paper, plastic, electronics, automotive, and perhaps some special wastes. The location and availability of recycling opportunities in and around the state for each should be identified. Their current status, capacity for recycling, economic impact, potential for further growth and development of the market, tax incentives available, as well as the barriers associated should be included in the report. The status of the markets for each sector should be addressed in the final report. Although it was discussed, agricultural recycling will not be included in the report in a comprehensive manner because it appeared to be somewhat out of the scope of the legislative task. It was suggested that the Task Force consider a conference call with South Carolina officials to determine questions asked on their survey. Mark Williams stated that while there is not a mandate to recycle there is a state law that requires the local government to have a recycling strategy within its local solid waste plan.

Mark Williams suggested that a smaller work group be formed of Task Force members, MDA staff and MDEQ staff to develop a draft outline for the report content and a draft of the recycling industry survey and bring it back to the whole task force for review and comment at the next meeting. The work group included Task Force members: Richard Harrell (MDEQ), Nick Wilson (MML) and Vernon Hartley (Farm Bureau); MDA staff: Kenneth Calvin and Bob Lord; and MDEQ staff Mark Williams and John David Burns. The Task Force then agreed that the group would meet again on Wednesday, September 6th, in Jackson, MS. The “Report/Survey” work group agreed to meet on Friday, August 25th at MDEQ to begin its discussions.

The meeting was then adjourned.