



education for action

STUDENT-DESIGNED PROJECT PROPOSAL

Process

Submit this proposal to Nancy Bell & Heather Furmidge for review and approval by the Executive Committee. NOTE: allow at least TWO weeks between the time you submit your proposal and the time you can present it to the class.

Date **November 7, 2011**

Project Title: **Rethinking Plastics 202**

Submitted by: **Stuart Moody**

Background Marin County has adopted a goal of Zero Waste by 2025. While paper, organics, and C & D debris represent the largest segments of our waste stream, plastics are a growing proportion of household and commercial waste. Plastics pose special risks due to high litter potential, contamination of recycling and compost systems, toxicity, and non-biodegradability. In response, several Marin jurisdictions have passed or instituted measures to reduce throw-away water bottles, plastic bags, and food service ware.

While single-use plastics (SUPs) have been a primary target of municipal action, EPR represents a second, more holistic approach to waste and toxics reduction. Integrated systems of producer take-back (of packaging as well as of products) hold the highest promise for reducing landfill waste, residual toxicity, and costs of hauling and recycling.

Opportunities/Challenges/Benefits:

In County and city deliberations about SUP reduction, the need for education and outreach has been a common theme. For commercial and governmental initiatives to take hold, a groundswell of public support is needed. For example, several years ago Good Earth Natural Foods (GENF) took plastic produce bags off the racks. Customers complained so bitterly that the owners felt compelled to reinstall the rolls of plastic within two weeks. Green Sangha then developed for GENF an educational campaign with detailed notification, reasons for the change, supportive signage, plentiful alternatives, cash incentives, and a gradual time-line for implementation. Over six months, the produce bags slipped away without a complaint⁰ and over a ton of plastic has been saved from the landfill and the streets each year.

Many business owners have expressed concern about dissatisfied customers should certain customary convenience items no longer be available, whether through ordinance or voluntary store policy. Through educational campaigns such as the one implemented at GENF, it is possible to inspire a real wish on the part of shoppers to do without wasteful packages and service ware.

Since 2006, Green Sangha has spoken at over 200 public, civic, and private venues in Marin County, detailing the environmental costs of plastics and describing healthy alternatives to citizens, businesses, and government agencies. These presentations catalyzed such actions as the Fairfax bag ban and innumerable changes in consumption practices at home and work. In 2010, the organization hosted a three-part conference, *Rethinking Plastics 201*, attended by a few dozen citizens and community leaders. We envision a follow-up conference, *Rethinking Plastics 202*, to share the latest research on plastic pollution, innovations in sustainable fibers, analysis of cutting-

edge proposals (e.g., hydrolysis, waste-to-energy, and bioplastics), and strategies for advancing the shift to Cradle-to-Cradle technologies.

The conference would be intended for policy-makers, agency heads, activists, and interested citizens. A follow-up piece would be a *Rethinking Plastics Training*, to give citizens a firm grasp on the issues and cultivate leadership. Since 2006, over 40 individuals have participated in speaker and outreach training for Rethinking Plastics, but fewer than 10 currently feel prepared and current enough to speak in public forums. The conference would function as an inspiration and invitation to these individuals and other eco-activists to renew or deepen their study of the issue and practice their speaking skills so that they can become leaders in the move to Zero Waste.

Goal: (long term)

1. To inspire citizens, businesses, and governmental agencies to adopt zero-waste practices and policies, and to promulgate these practices or policies among their families, friends, customers, and associates.
2. To develop leaders in the Zero Waste movement.

Scope/Milestones: (include March 20th deliverable(s))

December

Identify topics and list prospective speakers for each.

Generate list of venues, and reserve one.

Contact speakers and confirm their availability.

Set price for attendance.

January

Develop publicity plan.

Compose flyer and begin publicity.

Convene a conference call with all speakers to develop program and coordinate roles.

Consider film shorts to include.

Solicit volunteers to set up, greet, and take down.

Determine whether to include music; if so, contact musician(s).

Secure lunch; seek donation.

February

Continue strong publicity campaign.

Draft program, including music and film options.

Convene second conference call with speakers to review and revise program.

Solicit readings from speakers.

Select which materials to make available in print; prepare bibliography.

Prepare introductions for each topic and speaker.

March

Hold conference on Saturday March 10 or 17.

Give evaluation forms to all attendees; review evaluations and develop plan for follow-up, including but not limited to the RP training.

April

Hold RP trainings on Saturdays, April 7, 14, 28

Size of team/Skills needed:

A team of four is ideal. If fewer are available, committee members from Green Sangha will complement our efforts.

Any of the following skills can be helpful: Program planning, training development, publicity, graphic arts, donation outreach, introductions/presiding, music.

External Partners/Sponsors: (if any)

Green Sangha will be the sponsoring agency, but we can explore co-sponsorship with City of San Rafael, County of Marin, the JPA, Redwood Landfill and Resource Center, the Away Station, Mill Valley Refuse Service, Tamalpais Community Service District, and Marin Recycling.