Paint Stewardship
Why Local Governments Want a Law in Washington State

House Bill 1652. A paint stewardship bill is currently being considered in the 2019 Washington State legislative session. This bill would establish a comprehensive leftover paint management program that requires paint manufacturers to assume responsibility for the collection, recycling, reuse, transportation, and disposal of leftover paint, and that allows paint retailers to voluntarily participate in the collection of leftover paint.
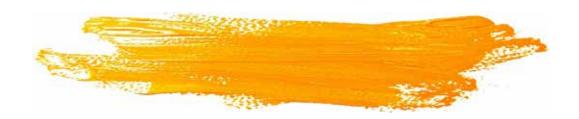
Local governments like product stewardship. Product stewardship policies engage the private sector in helping to manage products, such as paint, that are toxic or hard-to-handle. In Washington State, two-thirds of counties have product stewardship policies in their Comprehensive Solid or Hazardous Waste Management Plans.

Why Paint Stewardship?

- **Permanent, sustainable funding:** a small fee is charged on paint when purchased.
- **Dedicated fund**: the fund can only be used by the "Stewardship Organization," to fund the paint recycling program and cannot be redirected.
- **Serves residents and businesses**: both contractors and homeowners can drop off paint at one of many convenient collection sites across the state.
- **Supported by the paint industry**: paint stewardship programs have broad support from the paint manufacturing industry.
- **Managed by the private sector:** paint stewardship programs are run by non-profit product stewardship organizations and use waste management companies and others to provide services.
- **Years of experience and tested programming:** the paint industry has been taking back paint for years in Oregon, California, and six other states. States with paint stewardship programs have much higher paint collection and recycling, relieving local governments of the burden of collecting paint for recycling.

Collecting Paint at the Curb

Practical Challenges. Many local governments prefer that paint be brought to paint stewardship drop off sites or collection events, rather than placed at the curb for the following reasons:

- Latex paint must be in liquid form to be recycled and recycling trucks are not designed to pick up liquids.
- Oil-based paint contains solvents and other toxic materials that can spill and cause harm.
- Paint can spill in the street, on workers, or in trucks and can be used for graffiti.
- Spilled paint may enter storm drains, the soil and harm people and the environment.
- People often don't know what's in their old paint cans: the contents might be more toxic than paint!
- Garbage rate payers would be charged for this service *regardless* of whether they use paint or not.

Paint spilled at the curb that is being cleaned up to prevent it from entering the storm drain

Curbside Collection. Residential curbside collection of paint for recycling is not included in any curbside recycling contracts and has never been attempted in Washington State. There are many reasons for this, including the following:

- To include paint in curbside recycling programs, franchise area service providers are required to seek Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (UTC) approval for rate increases, which is a lengthy process.
- The rate increases would apply to all solid waste ratepayers, including those that do not use paint – as opposed to a product stewardship system which is paid at the point of purchase by those that buy and use paint.
- Cities that contract for curbside recycling services would have to amend and renegotiate their complex contracts.
- Residential curbside collection service would not include the business sector such as paint contractors – leaving out a large segment of paint generators.
- Each local government would have to negotiate their own system, promote and fund the program.

In contrast, a legislated paint stewardship system would take approximately 12-18 months to implement across the entire state, would create jobs, and establish a coordinated statewide collection and recycling infrastructure for paint.