

Recycling Reform Advisory Council

Meeting Notes

September 17, 2026, 9:00am-11:30 am PT

[Meeting Slide Deck Link](#)

- Welcome (9:00-9:15am)
 - Review agenda
 - Housekeeping and Attendance

Name	Organization	Attendance
Megan Daum	American Beverage Association	Y
Danielle Waterfield	AMERIPEN	Y
Casey Bouchard	Methow Recycles	Y
Jeff Zillich	WM	Y
Rick Vahl	Waste Connections	Y
Amanda Dalton	Northwest Grocery Retail Association	Y
Moji Igun	Zero Waste Washington	Y
Ming-Ming Tung-Edelman	CareMakers Collective	N
Alissa Campbell	Recology	Y
Jay Blazey	Cedar Grove	Y
Trace Bradburn	City of Spokane	N
McKenna Morrigan	Seattle Public Utilities	Y
Becci Piepel	Douglas County Solid Waste	Y
Grant Williams	Tribal Solid Waste Advisory Network	Y
Jocelyn Quarrell	Bold Reuse	N
Karen Hultgren	Pierce County	Y
Michael Liptack	Friday Harbor	Y
Peter Lyon	WA State Department of Ecology	Y
Julie Gilbertson	CAA	Y

- Call for disclosure of conflicts of interest
 - No conflicts of interest disclosed
- Ecology Updates (9:10-9:20)
 - Needs assessment
 - [All five preliminary needs assessment technical memos have been released](#)
 - Ecology expects the compiled preliminary needs assessment draft to be released around October 1, with a public comment period anticipated October 1–30. The Advisory Council will discuss the draft October 8 and November 19.
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- Ecology expects the final draft to move into agency review in December, with publication targeted for early January.
- Q&A/Discussion
 - AC Member: Were there significant concerns, red flags, or surprises in the technical memos?
 - Ecology: Subcommittee feedback has been limited, but Ecology subject-matter experts have provided substantial edits. No major red flags were identified. A challenge is crosswalking data about the existing recycling system with the narrower scope of covered materials and services under the RRA.
 - CAA: Will edits to the individual technical memos be incorporated into the compiled preliminary draft?
 - Ecology: Earlier memos are more likely to have comments incorporated by October 1. Later memos may not yet reflect all edits. The technical memos will ultimately be published as appendices and can continue to be refined.
- [Rulemaking Update \(9:20-9:35\)](#) - Ecology
 - Ecology confirmed that the public is welcome to attend Rule Committee meetings.
 - Resources:
 - [Ecology Rule website](#)
 - [Ecology newsletter signup](#)
 - Discussion
 - AC Member: How do the Rule Committee and Advisory Council differ and intersect?
 - Ecology: The Rule Committee focuses only on rule language; the Advisory Council is reviewing broader RRA implementation topics such as the needs assessment and statewide lists. The work runs in parallel, and there is no requirement for members to serve in both.
 - AC Member: What have been major topics in the Rule Committee so far?
 - Ecology: Ecology initially tested a more extensive approach that repeated statutory language within rule, but feedback was mixed. Ecology is now pursuing a more streamlined rule that adds clarification where needed. Future topics likely to require significant input include requirements for alternative collection programs.
 - AC Member: Are there timing pinch points between rulemaking and other RRA deliverables?
 - Ecology: Yes. Rulemaking, the needs assessment, and PRO program planning overlap and depend on one another. Ecology and CAA are communicating regularly to manage those interdependencies.
- Producer Responsibility Organization Update (9:35-9:40am)
 - CAA will provide additional information at a future Council meeting about how the needs assessment will inform program planning.
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- Recycling Refund Engagement Study – ERG (9:40-10:10) [[Meeting and Recommendation slides](#)]
 - [Recycling Refund Study Draft for review](#)
 - Q&A/Discussion
 - AC Member: Further analysis should consider the system and cost implications of moving materials such as aluminum or glass into a deposit/refund system versus keeping them within the broader RRA recycling system.
 - AC Member: What feedback was received from retailers?
 - ERG: Retailers with experience in deposit-return states raised concerns about staffing, safety, sanitation, storage, and related operating costs. The Washington model differs from Oregon because it does not assume a broad retail return mandate; retailer participation would instead be negotiated with the program.
 - AC Member: Was the cost of operating the modeled 582-site network analyzed?
 - ERG: No. Cost analysis was outside the scope of the study.
 - AC Member: How were residents who are not already engaged in recycling policy represented?

- ERG: Nearly 2,000 survey responses came through a more intentionally designed paid-response approach that prioritized underserved communities, and community-based organizations in three counties conducted compensated engagement through trusted local relationships.
 - AC members were asked to review the draft final engagement report, technical appendix, and raw survey data and provide feedback by October 5. Review questions focus on whether findings reflect the range of perspectives, whether recommendations are clearly connected to the model and engagement results, and whether additional equity, operational, or recycling-system considerations should be addressed.
- Statewide List recap + Next steps (10:10-11:10)
 - Discussion
 - AC Member: Public-place recycling should prioritize materials typically generated away from home, especially bottles and cans; food-service packaging may create contamination concerns when residents cannot reasonably make items empty, clean, and dry.
 - AC Member: What do Food Packaging Institute studies used in the assessment indicate about food-contamination rates?
 - ERG: Recent studies suggest food contamination may be less prevalent than commonly assumed, though available research does not directly address public-place collection. Ecology noted that MRF operators have cautioned against increasing contamination.
 - AC Member: A narrower or jurisdiction-specific public-place list could undermine one of EPR's goals of statewide consistency. Food-service packaging is also one of the materials most likely to be generated in public places.
 - AC Member: The official collection list and the images/messages placed on a receptacle do not necessarily need to be identical. Maintaining a broad official list could help ensure the program accounts for materials that residents place in public bins.
 - Ecology: Covered producers would still pay into the EPR system even if a particular material were not on the public-place list. However, Ecology acknowledged a potential mismatch where materials may be recycled from public-place bins even if treated as contamination for program purposes.
 - CAA: Producer fee-setting and performance-target work is still developing. Covered services include paying for contamination, and clearer material descriptions are important for producer reporting and program planning.
 - AC Member: Seattle has a broad public-place recycling program but has not directly characterized material in those receptacles. SPU offered access to its containers if needs-assessment funding supports a characterization study.
 - Ecology and ERG noted that additional public-place data could help evaluate contamination and messaging, but such a study is not currently planned and would require additional scope/budget. Seasonal variation would also complicate a one-time characterization.
 - CAA: What about state parks?
 - Ecology: State Parks did not have complete data on where public-place recycling receptacles currently exist. Ecology noted that the statute generally establishes an August 1, 2025, baseline for existing public-place receptacles, while the PRO program plan includes a mechanism for adding public-place locations. Conditions vary significantly among trailheads, campgrounds, and parks in different parts of the state.
 - CAA: Baseline information should capture, to the extent possible, where existing public-place receptacles are located across urban, rural, and remote areas.
 - Ecology/ERG: Continue forward as planned and leave the residential and public-place lists harmonized for the preliminary October lists, while flagging public-place suitability, contamination, receptacle design, and messaging for continued evaluation through the needs assessment and later program development.
- Subcommittee Updates (11:10-11:15)

- The Needs Assessment Subcommittee has been paused during development of the preliminary needs assessment so the full Advisory Council could be brought up to speed. Additional Needs Assessment Subcommittee meetings are expected as work moves into 2027.
- Public Comment (11:15-11:25)
 - Question: Has Ecology considered how collection requirements may affect packaging used for products with heightened food-safety requirements, such as meat and poultry?
 - Ecology: Non-compostable film plastic packaging in direct contact with raw meat is specifically exempt under the law. The law also includes a petition process for additional direct-contact meat-packaging exemptions, and Ecology is developing a petition form. Ecology will consider whether the statewide-list descriptions should more clearly address raw-meat-contact packaging within broader food-contact categories.
 - Question: How might the expedited rulemaking on litter receptacles and labeling affect statewide accepted-list development?
 - Ecology: The expedited rulemaking is intended to remove older conflicting labeling requirements. Ecology does not see a direct impact on statewide list development; receptacle labeling requirements and determinations about which materials are accepted can proceed in parallel.
- Preview of Next Meeting Content (11:25-11:30)
 - Next Advisory Council meeting is in Spokane, 10/8
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