



1997-1999 Biennial Report to the Legislature

State Litter Program Activity Summary Update

**Publication #00-07-018
March 2000**

 Printed on Recycled Paper

Note this report serves as an update to Ecology Publication #98-508, released in December 1998.

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Washington State Department of Ecology
Solid Waste and Financial Assistance Program

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March 31, 2000

TO: The Honorable Karen Fraser, Chair
Environmental Quality & Water Resources Committee
Washington State Senate

The Honorable Kelli Linville, Co-Chair
The Honorable Gary Chandler, Co-Chair
Agriculture and Ecology Committee
Washington State House of Representatives

FROM: Cullen Stephenson, Manager
Ecology Solid Waste & Financial Assistance Program

SUBJECT: Report to the Legislature – State Litter Program Activity

In the spring of 1998, the Legislature passed the 1998 Litter Act (Second Substitute House Bill 3058, amending Chapter 70.93 Revised Code of Washington). The legislation requires the Department of Ecology (Ecology) to provide the Legislature with a report summarizing litter activities each biennium. This report provides information on litter activities during the 1997-1999 Biennium. I'm proud to report that we have accomplished a great deal. Here are some highlights.

- Ecology Youth Corps tripled our pickup rates compared to the prior biennium.
- Our litter survey provided evidence that we cannot reach zero litter through cleanup alone - prevention measures are needed.
- Our litter survey effort is complete – the report is due to be released in May 2000.
- Funding and coordination of other state agencies and local government litter efforts is operational and successful.

We are now revising our performance measures and are exploring how to incorporate prevention efforts into our programs. (Of course, we'll continue our pickup work as well.) Please call me with any questions and concerns. My number is (360) 407-6103. Thank you.

1997-1999 Biennial Report to the Legislature Summarizing State Litter Program Activity

Executive Summary

The 1997-1999 biennium brought many changes to Washington State's litter programs. The passage of the 1998 Litter Act placed Ecology in a new leadership role in coordinating the cleanup and prevention of litter statewide. The legislation directs the Department of Ecology (Ecology) to coordinate litter activities between state agencies and local governments to improve effectiveness and efficiency. In December 1998, Ecology reported on progress in implementing the legislation. This report serves as an update on those and other activities conducted in the 1997 – 1999 biennium. Some significant activities include:

- 1. Litter Cleanup** – Litter cleanup activities reached an unprecedented level, with Ecology Youth Corps picking up **three times** the number of bags from last biennium (from 44,360 bags to 145,318 bags). Despite this success, our state has more litter than ever. We are working to find and implement prevention measures.
- 2. Funds to Local Governments** – Two annual cycles of the Community Litter Cleanup Program were completed, making litter cleanup funds available to 41 solid waste planning jurisdictions statewide.
- 3. Coordinating with State Agencies** – Ecology continues to coordinate litter activities with other state agencies through a state agency work group. In fiscal year 1999 Ecology distributed \$504,000 (originally dedicated to the EYC budget) to other state agencies to expand litter pickup programs statewide. Ecology worked with the work group to plan and budget for activities in the 1999-2001 biennium. The state agency work group improved accountability by formalizing a process for reporting litter activities.
- 4. Litter Survey** – Ecology continued work on a statewide litter survey. Fieldwork that began in the fall of 1998 continued through the fall of 1999. The goals of the survey are to gain information about litter composition, generation rates, and littering behavior. The information will be used to target cleanup efforts and develop prevention strategies in the 1999-2001 biennium.

1997-1999 Biennial Report to the Legislature Summarizing State Litter Program Activity

Introduction

In the spring of 1998, the Legislature passed the 1998 Litter Act (Second Substitute House Bill 3058, amending Chapter 70.93 Revised Code of Washington). The legislation required the Department of Ecology (Ecology) to provide the Legislature with a report summarizing litter activities for the biennium. In December of 1998, Ecology prepared a report to the Legislature describing Ecology's progress to date on implementing the legislation. This report serves as an update to Ecology Publication #98-508, released in December 1998.

Increased concern over the litter problem was brought to the forefront in 1997 when Ecology convened a Litter Task Force to examine the effectiveness of litter control in Washington State as it is carried out in accordance with the Waste Reduction, Recycling and Model Litter Control Act (RCW 70.93). Several recommendations were made for improving the existing system and moving toward a standard of zero litter throughout the state. These recommendations were presented to the 1998 State Legislature and formed the basis of the 1998 Litter Act.

Ecology's Progress in Implementing the New Legislation

Ecology's work in the 1997-1999 biennium focused on implementing the changes prescribed by the 1998 legislation. The legislation made Ecology responsible and accountable for administering state agency allocations of litter tax funds. It also called for a central coordinator within Ecology to work cooperatively with other state agencies (Parks and Recreation Commission and the Departments of Corrections, Natural Resources, Transportation, and Revenue) to develop programs and monitor their progress and results. By centralizing management of the fund, litter collection and prevention efforts are better coordinated and more efficient. Ecology also improved accountability through development of performance measures to guide future expenditure of litter funds and quantify accomplishments.

In July 1998, a new statewide litter programs coordinator was hired. The coordinator tracks progress in litter prevention and pickup, manages the budgeting process for litter programs, and serves as a central resource for collecting and sharing litter information. A key function of the new position has been to coordinate cleanup efforts statewide. An effort to coordinate with other state agencies was accomplished through formation of a state agency work group. Through an interagency agreement process, Ecology distributed \$504,000 to the other state agencies to augment litter cleanup activities in fiscal year 1999. In conjunction with the budget process, the group planned and prioritized work for the 1999-2001 biennium. Ecology dedicated approximately \$1 million to other state agency efforts in the 1999-2001 biennium, executed through interagency agreements.

We are on the right track to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of litter cleanup activities. Ecology has developed performance measures that track outputs such as quantity of litter picked

up and number of miles cleaned. Ecology has also explored outcome measures that attempt to quantify the impact of litter activities on the “cleanliness” of the state and our progress towards zero litter. One such measure uses Department of Transportation data that provide an objective measurement of litter in different areas in the state. The unfortunate news is that despite all the extra effort of statewide litter crews, litter continues to be prevalent in many areas. While the momentum of cleanup efforts will continue into the next biennium, it will be impossible to keep pace with the amount of litter being generated. Clearly, prevention strategies must be coupled with cleanup efforts to reduce the amount of litter generated in Washington.

Funding

The Waste Reduction, Recycling and Litter Control Account is funded through a litter tax imposed on industries whose products are related to the litter problem (see Chapter 82.19 Revised Code of Washington). The 1998 legislation provided clear direction on how litter funds are to be allocated in the 1999-2001 biennium; twenty percent is to provide funding to local communities, thirty percent is to fund Ecology’s waste reduction and recycling efforts, and fifty percent is to fund litter cleanup efforts. Besides funding the Ecology Youth Corps, the fifty percent dedicated to cleanup will fund litter activities carried out by the other state agencies.

In the 1997-1999 biennium, there was approximately \$12 million in the litter tax fund. The Legislature appropriated \$10.90 million, leaving a fund balance of approximately \$1 million. Ecology was provided \$2.06 million for a local government funding program, \$3.09 million for waste reduction and recycling activities and \$5.15 million for litter pickup activities. A total of \$856,000 of Ecology’s litter cleanup money went to other state agencies.

1997-1999 Litter Tax Fund Distribution		
Dept. of Ecology	EYC (litter cleanup)	\$4,302,000
	Waste Reduction & Recycling	\$3,094,800
	Local Government Funding	\$2,063,200
	Sub-total Ecology Programs	\$9,460,000
Dept. of Corrections	Pass through from Ecology (litter cleanup)	\$352,000
Other Agencies*	Interagency Agreements (litter cleanup)	\$504,000
Ecology Appropriation (total)		\$10,316,000
Parks & Recreation	Direct Appropriation	\$34,000
Dept. of Natural Resources	Direct Appropriation	\$450,000
Dept. of Revenue	Direct Appropriation	\$100,000
Total Appropriation		\$10,900,000
Unappropriated		\$1,000,000
Total		\$11,900,000

**This money, originally allocated to Ecology’s EYC program, was distributed to five other state agencies through interagency agreements. Specific details are provided beginning on page 6.*

Statewide Litter Survey

The legislation directs Ecology to conduct a statewide litter survey, to be used to guide prevention and cleanup efforts. In August 1998 Ecology entered into contract with Cascadia Consulting Group of Seattle, to assist in the design and implementation of a statewide litter survey. The goal of the survey is to gain information about litter composition, generation rates, sources of litter, litter behavior, and the characteristics of persons who litter. This information will help us to develop performance measures, target cleanup efforts, and develop prevention strategies.

Ecology used three approaches to collect information. First, the design team developed a statistically sound sampling plan to collect litter from different areas in the state to determine its composition and generation rates. The Ecology Youth Corps (EYC) completed a majority of the fieldwork, with assistance from Department of Corrections, Department of Transportation, Department of Natural Resources, the Parks and Recreation Commission, and many local government organizations. Although the litter survey detracted from traditional EYC work, over 65,000 pounds of litter were removed from state roads and public areas as part of the project.

The second approach used focus groups targeting people identified as “potential litterers.” The focus group discussions were designed to collect qualitative data regarding why people litter and what might convince them to stop. The third approach was a random telephone survey of Washington residents. The phone survey was used to gage the results of the focus groups against the general population and to gather quantitative data regarding the types of people and situations that create litter.

While the focus groups and the telephone survey were completed in the 1997-1999 biennium, the fieldwork continued into the 1999-2001 biennium, with the final report due in May 2000.

Funding For Local Communities

Ecology was directed to provide \$2.06 million in funding to local governments for litter cleanup efforts in the 1997-1999 biennium. With guidance from the Litter Task Force, Ecology developed a program offering contracts through each county and the cities of Everett and Seattle. These are the local solid waste planning jurisdictions.

The first round of funding for the Community Litter Cleanup Program (CLCP) was advertised broadly, including distribution of information letters to all city and county officials, state Solid Waste Advisory Committee members, local corrections officials, and Litter Task Force members (2,500 letters total) in January 1998. Eight information workshops were held statewide in March and attracted representatives from all counties, several cities, and state and local corrections agencies. The workshops were conducted in partnership with staff from the Department of Corrections and the Executive Director of the Jail Industries Board.

Interagency agreements for the first round (calendar year 1998) of the CLCP program totaled approximately \$1,100,000. Thirty-eight out of forty-one eligible applicants received funding. The CLCP program continued for a second round (calendar year 1999), with 40 out of the 41

eligible applicants receiving funding. The first round offered funding up to \$30,000. The second round offered funding up to \$32,000.

The CLCP program has been successful in part due to the ability of local governments to leverage additional resources. In many counties, local and/or state corrections crews are participating in these projects to cleanup litter and illegal dumps. In addition, several local governments have partnered with volunteer groups and civic organizations to cleanup parks, local trails, state forests, and other public areas.

Reports from program participants indicate that the program is an overwhelming success. In 1999, almost 3.2 million pounds of litter and illegally dumped materials were collected from 27,000 road miles, 10,000 acres and 2,000 illegal dumpsites. Ecology has also received reports on the less tangible benefits of the program. For example in Clallam County, medium-security inmates, who otherwise would have been idle in jail, have been put to work. The supervisor of the program reports the inmates have developed a work ethic and a sense of pride in service to the community. In Island County, volunteers have united to clean local beaches, building a sense of community and stewardship.

Ecology Youth Corps

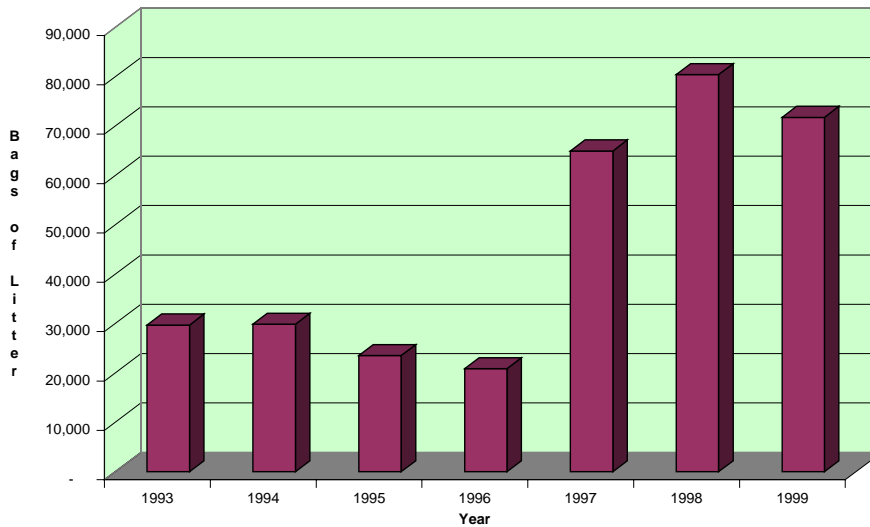
Due to a concern over the increased amount of litter on the state’s highways, Ecology examined and refocused the Ecology Youth Corps program (EYC). Spring, summer, and fall median crews that focused on medians, interchanges, and on/off ramps were added, as were additional traditional summer crews that worked road shoulders and public access areas.

The EYC program continues to be successful in cleaning up roads and public areas, and providing employment for the state’s youth. In 1997 fifty-two crews were deployed, in 1998 sixty crews were deployed, and in 1999 fifty-seven crews were deployed. In addition to their usual duties, the 1998 and 1999 EYC crews took on the additional task of assisting with the statewide litter survey. The table (below) and graph (on the next page) list some EYC statistics and illustrate EYC’s performance history. Please note that the data are presented in calendar years.

EYC Total Output				
	1997	1998	1999	Total
Total Bags Litter*	64,947	80,371	71,732	217,050
Road Miles Cleaned	5,900	7,781	5,373	19,054
Acres Cleaned	1,038	755	5,112	6,905
Bags Recycled	8,679	10,651	7,755	27,085
Total lbs. recycled	92,937	106,521	64,632	264,090

*A bag of litter weighs approximately 15 pounds.

Ecology Youth Corps Litter Pick-Up Trends 1993 - 1999



*This chart does not include litter picked up by Adopt-A-Highway or other agencies.

Other State Agency Efforts

In the 1997-1999 biennium, the Parks and Recreation Commission and the Departments of Natural Resources and Revenue received a total of \$584,000 in direct litter fund appropriations from the Legislature. The Department of Corrections received pass-through funding of \$352,000 from Ecology (see page 3).

For fiscal year 1999, Ecology provided an additional \$504,000 from the EYC budget to other state agencies involved in litter cleanup activities, with the intent of expanding cleanup efforts. The interagency agreement process provided all the agencies an opportunity to learn about each other's work and set the groundwork for better coordination of cleanup efforts in the future. The agreements provide for accountability by requiring the state agencies to report quarterly on the expenditure of funds and activities. The table below shows how the funds were distributed.

1997-99 Litter Funds to State Agencies other than Ecology			
Agency	Biennial Appropriation	Additional funding from Ecology \$\$	Total
Natural Resources	450,000	70,000	520,000
Parks & Recreation	34,000	30,000	64,000
Revenue	100,000	4,000	104,000
Corrections	0	652,000	652,000
Transportation	0	100,000	100,000
Total	584,000	856,000	1,440,000

The five state agencies received a total of \$1,440,000 in the 1997-1999 biennium for litter activities.

Department of Corrections

In this biennium, Department of Corrections (DOC) received a total of \$652,000 for litter projects. The DOC provides labor for litter control and cleanup of illegal dumps around the state using the services of community-based offenders performing community service hours and minimum custody inmates. DOC crews operate in various locations throughout the state and are available to both local governments and other state agencies. Litter funds given to DOC are primarily used to pay for crew supervisors and the equipment (tools, clothing, and vehicles) needed to perform litter cleanup tasks.

The first period for which DOC reported litter activity to Ecology was fiscal year 1999. In that time, DOC crews collected approximately 400,000 pounds of litter and illegally dumped material from 2,200 miles of road and 1,900 acres of public land. Offenders spent 34,000 hours collecting litter.

DOC has also invested in a data tracking system that will allow them to carefully account for crew hours, litter collected, and illegal dumps cleaned. DOC and Ecology staff began to develop a formal data reporting system that will be transferable to all agencies involved in litter pickup. Their contribution to statewide litter programs is irreplaceable and Ecology intends to build on the cooperative relationship already established.

Department of Transportation

The Department of Transportation (DOT) did not receive a direct appropriation in the 1997-1999 biennium, but Ecology provided them with \$100,000 in FY99. The DOT picks up litter as part of its routine highway maintenance responsibility along 7,000 miles of state highways. DOT's two primary litter activities are pickup and disposal of litterbags and administration of the Adopt-a-Highway program. In FY99, DOT picked up over 89,000 cubic yards of litter, collected by EYC, DOC, and Adopt-a-Highway groups. The funds provided were used to defray disposal costs.

Parks and Recreation Commission

In the 1997-1999 biennium, the Parks and Recreation Commission (Parks) received a total of \$64,000 for litter projects. Parks traditionally uses litter funds on waste reduction and recycling efforts as well as litter control. Most litter collection is done by park rangers, parks users, and volunteers. The additional funds provided to Parks in the interagency agreement with Ecology for fiscal year 1999 was used to defray disposal costs.

Department of Natural Resources

In the 1997-1999 biennium, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) received a total of \$520,000 for litter projects. Litter and illegal dumpsites are significant issues on public lands in Washington. Litter funds that DNR received are being used to support corrections camp crew supervisors, costs associated with running litter crews, and disposal fees. In 1997, litter crews collected over 9,000 cubic yards of litter and 1,500 tires from state lands. In the interagency

agreement signed with Ecology for fiscal year 1999 activities, DNR continued to fight the illegal dump problem on state lands.

Department of Revenue

The Department of Revenue (Revenue) received \$100,000 from the Litter Account for administration of the litter tax. In response to concern over the effectiveness of litter tax collection, Revenue launched a taxpayer education program that is expected to improve compliance. The materials inform taxpayers that the litter tax can now be paid at the same time the business pays its B&O tax. Ecology provided Revenue with \$4,000 to fund the development of educational materials.

Future Activities

The 1997-1999 biennium brought many changes to Washington State's litter programs. The passage of the 1998 Litter Act placed Ecology in a new leadership role in coordinating the cleanup and prevention of litter statewide. Ecology has made great progress in implementing the legislation and is committed to moving towards the zero litter goal for Washington State. Coordination efforts have improved the efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability of litter cleanup programs. However, evidence from the litter survey indicates that sustaining cleanup activity will not get us to the zero litter goal without a significant prevention effort. Ecology is committed to working with local governments, business and industry, and our state agency partners to pursue a prevention strategy while maintaining levels of cleanup activity. Some initiatives and challenges for the 1999-2001 biennium include:

- 1. Data Reporting** – All programs that receive money from the Litter Account are responsible for reporting their activities to Ecology. While most entities provide regular reports, Ecology will continue to work with user groups to standardize reporting elements and bring data tracking systems in line with our performance measurement objectives.
- 2. Budget Development** – Ecology is currently working to develop efficiency and effectiveness criteria to guide future budget decisions. Input from CLCP recipients and the state agency workgroup will be sought and considered when developing the 2001-2003 biennial budget request.

Initiative 695 may also impact litter programs. The budget cuts experienced by the Department of Transportation limit their ability to provide litter pickup for the Ecology Youth Corps, Adopt-a-Highway, Department of Corrections and others. Ecology has pledged to work with DOT to find creative solutions in order to ensure continuation of litter pickup programs.

- 3. Coordination** – Ecology has begun to coordinate litter activities among state agencies and CLCP program representatives through a series of regional meetings. The meetings facilitate communication among groups, identify opportunities for collaboration, eliminate duplicative effort, and prioritize litter cleanup work. Additionally, the meetings provide a

forum for Ecology to receive feedback on litter programs and input on program development.

4. **Litter Survey** – In the 1999-2001 biennium, Ecology will carefully review the results of the litter survey. The information will be used to target cleanup efforts and develop prevention strategies. Since the legislation requires Ecology to conduct a litter survey each biennium, planning for the next survey will begin as soon as the final report of the last survey is completed.
5. **Litter Prevention** – Despite our success in litter pickup, it is clear that the roads have more litter than ever. We have revised our performance indicators to include measures of road cleanliness.

Once the litter survey results are made available through a final report, Ecology will be working with our litter partners to develop prevention strategies. Since the litter telephone survey indicated that only 38 percent of Washington residents consider litter an important issue, increasing awareness of litter issues will be a main goal. Ecology will continue to foster grassroots participation in litter prevention measures.