

# CollElectronics Event

## May 26<sup>th</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup>, 2006

### Whitefish and Columbia Falls



## Final Report

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## **I. Background**

The Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) was requested by Senator Dan Weinberg of Whitefish to organize a community electronic waste collection event as a pilot project in the Columbia Falls and Whitefish area of Flathead Valley. DEQ responded with plans to offer a series of community electronic waste collection events as pilot projects in the Flathead, Missoula, and Helena area. The Whitefish event, held on May 26 – 27, 2006 was the first event to be held and this final report will offer insights on its success and suggestions for improvements to future events.

Upon learning of the three planned events, other communities and organizations approached the Department about events in their communities. In addition, the Department wishes to hold pilot projects in the more rural areas of Eastern Montana and has approached several communities about future events.

The DEQ has joined the EPA Plug-In to eCycling program to maximize partnerships available to Montana as a sustainable e-waste recycling program is developed for the State. Plug-In To eCycling is a consumer electronics campaign working to increase the number of electronic devices collected and safely recycled in the United States. Plug-In To eCycling focuses on three major areas:

- Providing the public with information about electronics recycling and increasing opportunities to safely recycle old electronics.
- Facilitating partnerships with communities, electronics manufacturers, and retailers to promote shared responsibility for safe electronics recycling.
- Establishing pilot projects to test innovative approaches to safe electronics recycling.

Partnership with the EPA Plug-In program has facilitated discussions with national retailers and electronics manufacturers regarding their involvement in Montana's pilot projects. Montana is the first Rocky Mountain State to work with them and is setting an example in

doing so. This first pilot project in Whitefish did not involve Plug-In partnerships due to the still-developing relationships and Senator Weinberg's request to have the event by the end of May.

## **II. Summary**

### *Event Partners*

The following individuals, businesses and organizations partnered with DEQ to conduct this pilot project as a public-private partnership.

- Inland ReTech Recycling
- Senator Dan Weinberg
- Susan Seaman
- The Wave
- CyberPort
- Citizens for A Better Flathead

### *Event Supporters*

- Safeway
- Super 1 Foods
- Pizza Hut
- McKenzie River Pizza
- Midway Rentals
- Valley Recycling

Susan Seaman, Legislative Research Assistant for Senator Weinberg, was primarily responsible for planning this event. As a resident of Whitefish, Susan provided valuable organizing and networking opportunities; her participation was crucial to the success of the pilot project. In addition to doing all of the publicity and press releases, Susan recruited area businesses such as the Bigfork Schools and North Valley Hospital to participate.

The Department of Environmental Quality paid for the forklift and pallet jack equipment, as well as the stretch wrap needed for the event. Midway Rentals granted a 20% discount on the rental of a pallet jack and forklift. Pallets were purchased from Valley Recycling.

### *Collection Event Focus Area*

The event was focused in the Columbia Falls and Whitefish communities. Participation was not limited, however, and participants came from Big Fork, Kalispell and other area communities. Press releases and television interviews were carried by Kalispell newspapers and television stations. Publicity also included information on the planned July 15<sup>th</sup> electronics waste collection event in Kalispell.

### *Hauler/Recycler*

Inland ReTech is an electronics recycling firm located in Spokane, Washington. Initially interested in opening a warehouse in Missoula, they are now partnering with Palmer Electric to offer ongoing e-waste recycling in Missoula. Due to Inland's interest in opening a location in Montana and providing a market for electronic waste, the DEQ chose to partner with Inland ReTech on this pilot project. It is the first e-waste event for Inland ReTech in Montana.

Inland ReTech agreed to a public-private partnership that enabled the costs for recycling electronics to be paid directly to Inland ReTech by participants. Having a public-private partnership negated any need by the state to take possession of the computers at any point. It also avoided the need for a Request for Bids on supplying services, as the state did not receive any services.

DEQ staff visited the Inland ReTech facility July 5, 2005, and a completed Federal Electronics Challenge (FEC) audit confirms that Inland is a reputable electronics recycler that recycles 95% of the materials received.

### *Advertising and Outreach*

Outreach regarding this event began in April when Senator Weinberg met with a reporter from the Whitefish Pilot and released the date of the upcoming event. The following venues for advertising and outreach were used:

- a. Press releases sent to all area local newspapers.
- b. Public Service Announcements (PSAs) sent to all television and radio stations.
- c. Flyers posted and sent to North Valley businesses and organizations.
- d. Announcements/flyer included in local newsletters (Citizens for A Better Flathead, New World Recycling, The Wave and CyberPort.
- e. Television interviews with local stations by Senator Weinberg.
- f. Brochures and price lists distributed to area businesses and organizations.
- g. Letters and phone calls sent to area businesses that were likely to have recycling.
- h. Websites included the flyer and details: CyberPort, DEQ, Citizens for a Better Flathead, The Wave, area school systems, and others.

Copies are included as part of the Appendix.

### *Volunteer Recruitment and In-kind Donations/Contributions*

Susan Seaman arranged for volunteers, and DEQ staff recruited family to assist. Susan donated 63 hours of preparatory work the week leading up to the event. Susan, Senator Weinberg, Sandra Boggs (DEQ), and Brian Spangler (DEQ), also participated in several

meetings and conference calls while planning for the event.

#### Friday's Event (9 am to 4 pm)

Over the nine-hour period on Friday, a total of 9 volunteers put in 50 hours of work beside staff from DEQ (3) and Inland ReTech (1) to hold the event. Some volunteers were there for the whole day, and some were able to assist for several hours at a time. The three paid DEQ staff provided 40 hours of work.

#### Saturday's Event (9 am to 4 pm)

Over the nine-hour period on Saturday, a total of 6 volunteers put in 41 hours of work beside staff from DEQ (4) and Inland ReTech (1) to hold the event. Some volunteers were there for the whole day, and some were able to assist for several hours at a time. Four paid DEQ staff provided 36 hours of work.

Susan arranged for The Wave Athletic Club to sponsor the location for the event (back parking lot) and prepared signs directing traffic flow. She also arranged for CyberPort, a local computer firm, to volunteer each day and remove and physically destroy any hard drives upon request. Senator Weinberg and Susan volunteered both days, and Citizens for A Better Flathead had a volunteer there on Friday.

Sandra Boggs solicited donations of food or beverages from Safeway, Super 1 Foods, Pizza Hut and McKenzie River Pizza to keep the volunteers well fed and hydrated. A poster at the event thanked all partners and sponsors for their part in making the event possible. In addition, a Letter to the Editor of the Daily Interlake and The Hungry Horse News thanked the community sponsors for participating.

Susan printed Thank You cards which were handed to each participant as they left the event. The cards thanked participants for keeping hazardous waste out of the landfill and for making the effort to recycle. A copy is included as part of the Appendix.

### **III. Event Evaluation and Results**

The event went well. Participation at 127 was not overwhelming, but was a good introduction to e-waste recycling events for Whitefish-area citizens, DEQ staff, and volunteers. Per unit recycling fees likely affected participation. Informal surveys of participants found that most were happy to participate, although some came to the event unaware of the fees. More volunteers were needed to take down information and work with participants.

#### *Evaluation*

This event charge d participants a per unit recycling fee that ranged from \$.50 to \$25.00. The per unit fee probably affected participation. The fees (or range of fees) need to be included in all publicity. Alternatively, the public should be directed to websites or phone numbers to learn more about the fees. A more effective way of communicating fees needs to be found,

because although fee information was provided to Columbia Falls and Whitefish citizens, there were still some participants surprised to find that it wasn't a free event. One participant left after learning of the fees, and another participant stated that he would take his second load to the dump rather than pay more fees.

Most participants were happy to finally have a way of recycling old electronics. A total of 32 businesses and 95 individuals participated. The biggest participant was Big Fork Public Schools. They dropped off 160 pieces of equipment such as circuit boards, computers, scanners and printers. The North Valley Hospital dropped off 106 pieces of equipment. The total units dropped off for recycling was 769. A break down of units received by equipment type and also by manufacturer follow in the tables below.

**Table 1. Volume of Equipment Received**

<b>Product</b>	<b>Actual Units</b>
Audio/Visual Equipment	34
Batteries	3
Cell Phones/PDAs and Accessories	23
Computer Monitors	150
Desktop Computers	104
Combo Systems (CPU & CRT)	35
Ink Jet Cartridges	0
Laptops	20
Large Copiers	0
Printers/MFDs/Fax/Desktop Copiers/Scanners	133
Small Peripherals	174
Toner Cartridges	2
TVs	19
Other: Telephones, Answering Machines, Adding Machines	23
Other: Word Processors, typewriters	15
Other: Circuit Boards; hard drives	34
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>769</b>

**Table 2. Equipment Received by Manufacturer.**

<b>% Rec'd</b>	<b>Units*</b>	<b>Manufacturer</b>
26%	100	Apple/Macintosh
11%	42	Gateway, HP
5%	20	Epson
5%	19	Dell

5%	18	Compaq
4%	14	IBM
3%	13	Data General, Nokia
3%	10	Canon, Sony
2%	9	KDS, Magnavox
2%	8	NEC, Okidata
2%	6	Sharp
1%	5	Genicom, Panasonic, Samsung, Viewsonic
1%	4	Audiovox, Emerson, GE, Packard Bell, Philips, Sylvania, Tandy
1%	3	Brother, Hitachi, Kyocera, Lexmark, Netbuilder, Quantum, RCA, Smith-Corona, Toshiba
30%	118	Misc. Orphans or brands with less than 3 units recycled

\*The number of units listed here by manufacturer (389) does not match the total number of units received and noted in Table 1. Only units clearly identified as orphans or another brand are included here. Units with incomplete data, or peripherals with no data, were not included in Table 2.

#### IV. Budget and Expenses

Due to the public-private partnership strategy used in this event, a budget for this event was never developed. Sponsors were asked to track expenses so that a total cost could be calculated for the event. Sponsors provided in-kind donations of salaries and labor. The Department of Environmental Quality provided cash to cover advertising and equipment expenses. Total cost for the event, not including recycling fees paid by participants, was \$6,268.

Participants bore all costs for recycling the equipment. The fees charged likely impacted the number of people participating. Inland ReTech charged the full fees normally charged to Washington business clients. Dennis Ford of Inland ReTech believed this was necessary in order to cover his costs of transporting the collected equipment to Spokane for processing. Inland contracted with Mergenthaler's Trucking to store and move the equipment to Spokane. Dennis reported that his total transportation costs were \$437.

#### V. Conclusion

The event was successful and seemed well received by participants. The partnership with Senator Dan Weinberg's office was excellent and they are primarily responsible for the planning and implementation of this event. Local leadership was invaluable in pulling off the event. Support from Citizens for A Better Flathead, CyberPort and The Wave ensured good outreach and data destruction services were available to participants.

The high per unit costs for recycling electronic equipment was bore completely by participants (consumers). Work needs to continue to reduce consumer costs and increase participation. Sandra Boggs, Recycling and Marketing Development Specialist, DEQ, continues to develop

partnerships with national retailers and manufacturers to lower consumer costs and create sustainable electronics waste recycling programs in Montana.

## **VI. Appendix**