



# Sustainable Procurement Strategy

## *2006-2007 Progress Report*

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*A Joint Effort by Multnomah County and  
the City of Portland*



August 2007

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## **I. Executive Summary**

Since 2002 Multnomah County (the “County”) and the City of Portland (the “City”) have been working cooperatively on a strategy to incorporate sustainability criteria into purchasing decisions. This report summarizes years four and five of this effort and provides a specific set of recommendations in many of the city and county’s operational areas.

Through these recommendations, the City and County will be better able to achieve sustainability goals. 2006-2007 highlights include:

- integrating less-toxic cleaning processes and other best practices into uniform cleaning & delivery,
- establishing consistent practices to reduce herbicide and pesticide applications on government property,
- promoting biofuels and other emissions reduction practices among contractors,
- reviewing current use of industrial paint products to reduce exposure to toxins,
- educating City and County employees on how to “buy green” with their procurement cards,
- and expanding collaboration with other local governments in our region to promote sustainable purchasing.

## **II. Commodity Selection Process**

The Sustainable Procurement Strategy selected the following commodity areas for review based on upcoming contract opportunities, support for other adopted sustainability goals, and educational opportunities that could be replicated at the City of Portland, Multnomah County and other agencies.

1. Uniform Rental and Laundry Services
2. Landscape Maintenance Practices
3. Contractor Fuel Use
4. Industrial Paints

In addition to the commodity areas above, the steering committee decided to work on the following sustainable procurement education areas:

1. Greening Public Procurement Card Purchases
2. Collaboration with Regional Public Agencies and National Public Purchasing Networks

## **III. Commodity Review #1 - Uniform Rentals and Laundry Services**

### **Laundry & Rental Uniform Services**

Both the City and County faced expiring contracts in 2006 for laundry and uniform rental services. The types of uniforms/textiles rented and laundered in these contracts range from

coveralls to floor mats and lab coats to shop towels. Combined, these contracts are worth about \$150,000 a year. A workgroup of key end-users and procurement staff was formed to come up with recommendations for updating procurement specifications to include new quality and environmental considerations. The workgroup recommended that a request for proposals (RFP) format would be the best procurement process since it would enable the City and County to select a vendor based on multiple criteria, including environmental performance. The following areas for improved or new (\*) specifications:

- Customer service
- Quality assurance
- Types of laundry chemicals used (\*)
- No Perchloroethylene (\*)
- Fleet pollution prevention (\*)
- Water discharge permit compliance (\*)
- Packaging minimization (\*)
- Best practices in resource conservation at laundry facility (\*)
- Information on garment manufacturing location (\*)
- Minority, Women, and Emerging Small Business Utilization (\*)

Many of the areas identified for new specifications focused on pollution prevention and toxics reduction. These are areas that have also been included for review in the City-County Toxics Reduction Strategy (2006). Conventional industrial laundry chemicals have the potential for severe impacts on water quality and water ecosystems. While the U.S. EPA Design for Environment Industrial & Institutional Laundry Partnership has worked with product formulators to make safer industrial laundry cleaning products, there is not yet a comprehensive set of safer alternatives for use by industrial laundry facilities. Thus, the workgroup decided to require information in the new specifications regarding types of laundry chemicals used and secure interest from proposers on supporting the development of safer alternatives.

Other criteria areas referenced above were included for evaluative points. The exception to this was the garment manufacturing location questions, which were included as required information only on the City RFP. The City RFP for uniform rental and laundry services allocated 45% of the evaluation points to sustainability criteria and the County RFP in development aims to assign 25% of the evaluation points to sustainability criteria.

### **Alternatives to Perchloroethylene (Perc) Dry Cleaning**

Another tie-in from the City-County Toxics Reduction Strategy applicable to laundry services was the use of Perchloroethylene (perc) for cleaning City garments. Perc is regulated as hazardous waste and a hazardous air pollutant and is also currently listed as a probable human carcinogen by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the International Agency for Research on Cancer<sup>1</sup>. There are readily available alternatives for cleaning “dry clean only” clothes that, to date, pose less of a concern.

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<sup>1</sup> For more information about why perc was identified as a toxic of concern, refer to the City-County Toxics Reduction Strategy 2006, Appendix C at: <http://www.portlandonline.com/shared/cfm/image.cfm?id=126149>.

For both the City and the County, police, sheriff, and fire dress uniforms were the most likely garments to be dry cleaned. As individual staff are responsible for cleaning their uniforms, the City and County do not have contracts for dry cleaning services. Therefore, the workgroup decided to develop an employee education piece identifying less-toxic alternatives to using perc-based dry cleaning services. This employee education piece was distributed in Spring of 2007 to City employees and County public safety employees.

### **Suggested Recommendations for Further Action in the Laundry Services & Uniform Rental Commodity Area:**

1. Work with successful vendor of the new laundry/uniform rental services contracts to:
  - a. Further pursue the use of safer laundry chemicals and best practices in pollution prevention in other areas such as fleet use and packaging; and
  - b. Stay engaged with end-users to continuously improve service quality.
2. Conduct periodic updates to the employee dry cleaning alternatives flyer as information is available; make flyer available to employees as updated.

## **IV. Commodity Review #2– Landscape Maintenance Practices**

### **City of Portland Facilities Landscapes**

The City of Portland Parks and Recreation Bureau is nationally recognized for its efforts to reduce chemical use through implementation of an effective integrated pest management (IPM) strategy. A written, IPM-based, pest management program for Portland parks has been in place since the late 1980s and Portland parks are certified SalmonSafe.<sup>2</sup>

With the exception of the various rose gardens and Forest Park, the Parks Bureau uses pesticides sparingly in all other applications. Parks will use Roundup (or a Roundup equivalent) only around tree rings and along fence lines in the majority of the sites under their management. They also practice weed tolerance where appropriate (for instance, they won't use herbicides on annual weeds with short life spans that will die in the summer heat and drought). They do not use fertilizer on either turf or shrub beds, (except for heavily used sites like Delta Park and Waterfront Park). Turf is maintained instead through overseeding, aeration, and mulching mowers. Shrub beds are kept healthy with a combination of compost and mulch. Currently, Parks is experimenting with three, five-acre pesticide-free parks, and plans to publish their results in September of 2007. The Parks Bureau also manages all of its woody, organic waste on site, which is then reused on its shrub beds for mulch.

Many other City bureaus have utilized the expertise and best practices Parks has developed for their own landscaping practices, including using only products listed in the Parks approved pesticide lists<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> For more information on Salmon Safe visit the program's website: <http://www.salmonsafe.org/>.

<sup>3</sup> For more information on Portland Parks & Recreation IPM program visit: <http://www.portlandonline.com/parks/index.cfm?c=38296>

## Multnomah County Facilities Landscapes

Through its contract with Cascadia Wellspring Services, Multnomah County has an average of seven full-time landscapers dedicated to its properties year round, with annual contract costs of approximately \$240,000. However, a recent analysis found that contract inconsistencies, lack of contract oversight, budget constraints, and inadequate communication between property managers and contractor have rendered the employment of sustainable practices difficult on County sites.



A sustainable approach would treat landscapes as an investment in public health, water quality, and as a positive environment for County clients. This can be achieved through contract revisions, open communication between the county and the landscaping company, and implementation of less-toxic maintenance practices.

### Chemical Use on County Landscapes

Commonly used landscape maintenance chemical products used by the County contractor include:

- Buccaneer Plus (pesticide/herbicide)
- Powerzone (pesticide/herbicide)
- Surflan (pesticide/herbicide)
- Garlon (pesticide/herbicide)
- Wilbur Ellis Fertilizer 25-3-10

As of April 2007, a total of 239 gallons of pesticides in varying dilutions have been used on County Properties since January of 2007. Roughly seven hundred pounds of chemical fertilizer are expected to be applied to County landscapes during 2007.

A review of EPA literature, material safety data sheets (MSDS), and peer-reviewed studies showed that all five of these chemical products pose known or suspected threats to animal, plant, human and aquatic health. Toxicity impacts include toxicity to fish and other aquatic organisms, as well as links to human carcinogenicity.

Despite good intentions to support sustainable management of County landscaped areas, the current services contract falls short in several areas. For example, the contractor is required to use both pre-emergent and post-emergent pesticides, “as needed,” in addition to chemical fertilizers in varying amounts on turf and shrub beds. Hand weeding is suggested only “where commercial herbicides may cause damage to sensitive plants.” And though the contract does suggest that “in all cases, the least toxic chemical will be used,” in the absence of an approved pesticide list, this is left open to interpretation. Finally, an essential component of the contract

stipulates that mulch will be supplied by the County, every other year, at an annual cost of \$80,000. In three years, the county has supplied the contractor with just \$36,000 worth of mulch.

This lack of mulch, combined with contract requirements stipulating chemical use and the lack of effective communication between the County and the contractor result in reliance on both pre- and post- emergent herbicides as the primary method of weed and pest control.

### **Suggested Recommendations for Further Action in the Landscape Maintenance Commodity Area:**

#### **City**

1. As contracts are renewed or developed, ensure all landscaping maintenance contracts consistently refer to the Parks approved product list and other established best practices, including required regular communications and reporting between contractor and property managers

#### **County**

1. Provide adequate, ongoing contract oversight. Designate one county facilities staff person (preferably with landscaping knowledge) to communicate with contractor about landscape issues and implement sustainable practices as a team.
2. Increase communication and budget transparency between the property managers and contractor through quarterly meetings.
3. Secure funding to invest in the following upgrades which will allow for more sustainable landscape practices, phased-in over the next three years (by the end of 2010):
  - *Establish regular communication between contractor and property managers to discuss options to reduce pesticide use* such as cardboard/mulch for weed suppression, ground cover installation (also for weed suppression), and fertilizer elimination (modeled after Portland Parks turf maintenance program).
  - *Establish onsite management of all organic waste, modeled after Metro, the Portland Parks Bureau, and the Portland Bureau of Maintenance.* The costs of such a program could be offset by the current budget for new mulch at \$80,000 per year, in addition to the costs incurred by the landscape contractor for removal and disposal of landscape debris. Onsite management of waste, or partnering with other government composting facilities to accommodate County debris, can reduce the cost of purchasing mulch, as well as the financial and environmental effects of offsite disposal.
  - *Install computerized irrigation systems for larger sites.* Contractor estimates that on larger sites like Yeon or Inverness Jail, the payback for computerized systems through water savings is around three years
  - *Establish site-specific landscape restoration plans.* Years of deferred maintenance, antiquated landscape design, and large areas of unplanted beds have created the ideal environment for weed growth. Following the City of Portland's landscaping code for new construction and parking lots, and using natives where appropriate (shade), and non-invasive, disease and pest resistant, drought tolerant plants for sun, could

effectively reduce the need for fertilizers and pesticides through good landscape design.

- Consider *third-party certification for landscape services vendor* such as EcoBiz for landscaping contractors (<http://www.ecobiz.org/landmain.htm>).

The complete version of this analysis is available from the Multnomah County Sustainability Program.

## V. Commodity Review #3 – Contractor Fuel Use



Following successes in integrating biodiesel into City and County diesel fleets, the Steering Committee decided to look at opportunities for encouraging contractors to do the same. The Steering Committee chose to follow a proactive, collaborative approach in approaching contractors for a pilot test that could then be used to encourage other contractors to do the same. The County chose to review service/delivery contractors and the City chose to review residential garbage/recycling haulers.

The County's review included American Medical Response (AMR), Oregon Armored Services, and Aramark. At the time of the review, none of the companies were interested in conducting a pilot for biofuels or other emissions reduction practices with the County. In fact, many contractor contacts indicated that they felt they did not have any control over the decision of what kinds of fuels or vehicle technology to use, since those decisions and supply contracts are made at the corporate (national) level of their companies.

For the City, the steering committee's decision to look at having residential garbage/recycling haulers use biofuels coincided with the Office of Sustainable Development's (OSD, who oversees the residential hauler franchise agreement) to do the same. Thanks to OSD's efforts, in October of 2006 the franchise agreement with residential haulers was modified to require the use of B20 biodiesel by March 2007.

### **Suggested Recommendations for Further Action in Contractor Fuel Use:**

1. Include evaluation criteria in all contracts for hauling or delivery services that support the use of biofuels and other emission reduction best practices.
2. Work with hauling and delivery service contractors one-on-one over time to encourage the use of biofuels and other emission reduction best practices; in doing so, direct contractors to any grant money available for supporting these practices.
3. Work with the City Office of Sustainable Development to explore opportunities for encouraging or requiring contractors using construction equipment to use biofuels or other emission reduction best practices.

#### IV. Commodity Review #4 - Industrial Paints

The City of Portland and Multnomah County both use non-ferrous paints for coating metal structures such as water tanks, overpasses, railings, and steel bridges. Typically, these paints contain heavy metals, high levels of VOC's (volatile organic compounds) and other ingredients that are toxic to human health and to wildlife. These paints tend to have more than 120% higher VOC's than the low-VOC paints commonly specified for indoor use in County and City facilities.

City and County bridge and maintenance shops utilize the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) qualified products list (QPL) for structural paints, which was recently updated in early 2007. The ODOT QPL is based on performance and test results from the Northeast Protective Coating Committee (NEPCOAT) and the National Transportation Product Evaluation Program (NTPEP) as well as other ODOT specific criteria (including a 340 g/L VOC limit – product as delivered). The ODOT QPL is made up of what's known in the paint industry as 3-coat product systems, which inherently contain highly toxic ingredients, including known carcinogens, reproductive toxins, and severe skin and respiratory irritants.



While there currently are not any paint alternatives without known toxic ingredients on the market, there is an opportunity to reduce exposure to these ingredients by using fewer products. Utilizing 1-coat and 2-coat paint systems would reduce VOC emissions and likely reduce total exposure to ingredients of concern. Research indicates that 1 and 2-coat systems have been successfully utilized in other parts of the U.S. and around the world. In addition, the California Department of Transportation (CalTrans) has utilized zero-VOC water-based zinc primers and acrylic top coats in place of the typical 3-coat systems, which may be another option for City and County departments to reduce exposure to VOCs and ingredients of concern.

The City Water Bureau has already evaluated many of its paints for ingredients of concern and utilizes less-toxic paints for their exterior applications as available. Their experience can be shared with other agencies with similar exterior paint jobs.

#### **Suggested Recommendations for Further Action in the Industrial Paints Commodity Area:**

1. Document product findings (best practices) from Water Bureau experiences and share with other City and County departments as applicable.
2. Over time, test 1-coat and 2-coat products and other product systems (such as those used by CalTrans) in small areas for performance and quality. For applicable products, if products perform well, urge ODOT to conduct their own performance tests in order to include these alternatives on the ODOT QPL. Keep updated on new products that may contain fewer toxic ingredients of concern.

3. Conduct new research over the coming year on surface coatings to ease graffiti removal as well as update 2003 report on safer graffiti removal products

## **VII. Steering Committee Activity #1 – “Buy Green” Education for P-Card Users**

Recognizing that P-Card expenditures by the City and the County amount to tens of millions of dollars a year, the steering committee explored ways of encouraging card holders to buy more environmentally preferable and safer products. The committee developed a credit card sleeve with one side displaying tips on how to “buy green” and the other side displaying basic card etiquette.



Distribution of the sleeves to card holders began in April 2007 and will continue as new cards are issued. To further the “buy green” education, the card sleeve references a website address for card holders to learn more on how to make their individual purchases more sustainable. The website will be updated as new information and resources become available and periodic reminders will be sent to cardholders to “buy green.”

## **VIII. Steering Committee Activity #2 – Regional Collaboration & Networking**

Over the years the steering committee has gained valuable insights and best practices information from networking with other agencies also working on sustainable procurement issues. It is much more efficient to learn from other agencies’ experiences, when available, rather than starting from scratch. The steering committee also recognizes the value in sharing our experiences with our regional neighbors, especially those agencies without the staff to dedicate to these efforts. The following are some examples of how City and County staff have engaged with other agencies to facilitate collaboration and networking in 2006:

- The Responsible Purchasing Network (RPN) is a national is a national network of procurement-related professionals dedicated to socially responsible and environmentally sustainable purchasing. Jeff Baer, Director of the City Bureau of Purchases, sits on the national RPN steering committee and has served as a presenter for RPN at national government procurement conferences. RPN facilitates sharing best practices among government agencies and provides resources to help advance sustainable procurement programs.
- Both City and County staff have assisted the State of Oregon Department of Administrative Services (DAS) by providing expertise on sustainable procurement issues. City and County staff have served as guest trainers in DAS training programs as well as served on solicitation development and evaluation committees.
- City staff have served as guest speakers at various other conferences and trainings including: Oregon Public Purchasing Association, University of Oregon Sustainability Leadership Program, and the Northwest Paper Forum.

- City and County staff have fielded questions via email and phone from over 20 different agencies throughout the nation.

## **IX. Next Steps – Institutionalizing Sustainable Procurement**

### **1. Complete Outstanding Recommendations**

The Sustainable Procurement Strategy Steering Committee selected outstanding actions from previous years' recommendations for completion later this year. These include:

#### **A. Office Paper**

*City and County:* Renew effort to promote paper use reduction, especially through technology that promotes paper efficiency, to support the organizations' adopted paper policies.

*County:* Aim to offset the cost of phasing out 30% recycled-content papers in favor of higher-recycled content papers carried through Central Stores.

#### **B. Fuel efficient vehicle guidelines**

*County:* Develop fuel efficiency guidelines for county vehicle purchases as part of the upcoming Transportation Framework.

*City:* Review current vehicle standards; determine appropriateness of establishing fuel efficiency standards; work with fleet to develop standards if necessary

#### **C. Cleaning Products**

*County:* Revisit product usage in past year, determine next step to purchase general purpose cleaners that meet the county's Green Cleaning Policy. Consider purchasing sustainable cleaners from the new Western States Contracting Alliance (WSCA) contract developed by the State of Oregon Department of Administrative Services (DAS).

*City:* Follow-up with PHC and other custodial vendors on current green cleaning practices; work with vendors on improvement and a City green cleaning policy

#### **D. Computers/E-Waste (electronic waste)**

*County:* Integrate EPEAT standard into upcoming PC equipment purchases.

### **2. Reauthorize the Sustainable Procurement Strategy:**

As early adopters of an environmentally-preferable purchasing program, the City of Portland and Multnomah County were some of the first public agencies to address sustainability in government purchases. However, technology, market standards, and public procurement best practices have evolved significantly since the Sustainable Procurement Strategy was adopted in 2002.

Both the City and County procurement departments recognize the value in addressing sustainability through our procurement decisions and look forward to taking what we have learned over the past five years to establish a new approach to integrating public procurement and sustainability. A revised sustainable purchasing program will be developed during Summer of 2007, with a proposed update available in Fall 2007.

**For More Information**

Molly Chidsey  
Pollution & Waste Prevention Specialist  
Multnomah County Sustainability Program  
(phone) 503-988-4094

Stacey Foreman  
Sustainable Procurement Program Specialist  
City of Portland Bureau of Purchases  
(phone) 503-823-3508