

BEFORE THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
FOR MULTNOMAH COUNTY, OREGON

**RESOLUTION NO. \_\_\_\_\_**

Recognizing National Pollution Prevention Week And Directing Development Of A Toxics Reduction Strategy Jointly With The City Of Portland Using The Precautionary Principle

**The Multnomah County Board of Commissioners Finds:**

- a. On April 20, 2004, the Sustainable Development Commission of Portland and Multnomah County (SDC) and the Oregon Center for Environmental Health sponsored the *Precautionary Principle Workshop: A New Approach for Protecting Human Health and the Environment*, about toxic pollution prevention.
- b. The Precautionary Principle is an effective policy framework for decision-making to prevent harm to human health and the environment, and states that “Where threats of serious or irreversible harm to people or nature exist, anticipatory action will be taken to prevent damages to human and environmental health, even when full scientific certainty about cause and effect is not available, with the intent of safeguarding the quality of life for current and future generations.”
- c. The attached SDC report, *Precautionary Approaches for Health and the Environment*, finds that every Multnomah County resident has an equal right to a safe and healthy environment; but considerable evidence suggests this right is compromised, including the following:
  - o An estimated 700 contaminants are present and accumulate within the human body, many of them toxics that have known health risks.
  - o Cancer, asthma, birth defects, developmental disabilities, autism, endometriosis, and infertility are becoming increasingly common and are linked to toxic exposures from the environment.
  - o Children suffer disproportionately from environmental health risks and toxic pollution.
  - o Low income and politically marginalized communities are disproportionately exposed to toxic substances and pollution.
- d. Toxic substances have a profound negative impact on the indoor and outdoor environment, as shown by SDC report findings that:
  - o A section of the lower Willamette River is listed as a Superfund site, designating it as one of the most polluted rivers in the country. River sediment is polluted with unsafe levels of toxics, including mercury, PCBs, dioxins, DDT, as well as pesticides and herbicides.

- Fish from the Willamette and Columbia Rivers are contaminated with toxic pollutants at high levels resulting in consumption advisories from the Oregon Department of Health and Human Services.
  - Fourteen air toxics in Multnomah County exceed health-based benchmarks, with six pollutants more than ten times national health standards.
- e. Several regional governments have taken precautionary approaches to reduce toxic pollution, including the City of San Francisco, City of Oakland, City of Seattle, and the State of Washington.
- f. The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality has been directed to develop a plan to eliminate persistent bioaccumulative toxics in Oregon by 2020, and local governments in Oregon are encouraged to participate.
- g. Multnomah County has made progress in the area of toxics use reduction by including green building strategies, initiation of a pollution prevention program, eco-certification of fleet shops, and promoting best practices for pollution prevention through a water quality program.
- h. The County has adopted that support pollution prevention, including the Local Action Plan on Global Warming (Resolution 01-052), Sustainable Procurement Strategy (Resolution 02-058), and Sustainability Principles (Resolution 04-019) The Sustainability Principles state that Multnomah County will “Take necessary precautions to prevent toxic pollution and waste through proactive measures.”
- i. Preventing toxic pollution is economically sustainable; and as indicated in the SDC report:
- Toxic substances have negative impacts at all stages of the product life cycle, including manufacture, use, and disposal.
  - Pollution prevention lowers business costs related to pollution control, liability, and worker safety.
  - Quality of life, a key reason businesses locate in the Portland Metropolitan area, is associated with social, economic and environmental indicators.
  - Costs to society for diseases related to toxic substances such as loss of wages, increased expense for special education and medical treatment can be reduced.
  - A Toxics Reduction Strategy would initiate economic development by creating new opportunities for local business to provide safer alternative products, processes, and technologies.
- j. Multnomah County considers prevention of toxic pollution a high priority for action to reduce risk to public and environmental health, and intends by this resolution to encourage the reduction of use of toxic substances through pollution prevention and by utilizing the precautionary principle.

**The Multnomah County Board of Commissioners Resolves:**

1. The Board, in honor of National Pollution Prevention Week, recognizes the work that has been done to date by Multnomah County and the City of Portland to support reduction and elimination of public and environmental exposures to toxic pollutants.
2. The County, under the leadership of Commissioner Maria Rojo de Steffey, will participate in a workgroup to create a Toxics Reduction Strategy for government operations using the precautionary principle. The workgroup will include delegates from the City of Portland, Multnomah County, SDC and the community. The Sustainability Division of the Department of Business and Community Services will work with the workgroup, SDC, appropriate County departments, and the City of Portland to support this effort.
3. This Toxics Reduction Strategy should identify short-term and long-range goals for toxics reduction in government operations, actions to support those goals and be completed within one year of adoption of this resolution.

ADOPTED this 23rd day of September, 2004.

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
FOR MULTNOMAH COUNTY, OREGON

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Diane M. Linn, Chair

REVIEWED:

AGNES SOWLE, COUNTY ATTORNEY  
FOR MULTNOMAH COUNTY, OREGON

By \_\_\_\_\_  
Matthew O. Ryan, Assistant County Attorney