

Paint Project has Statewide Economic Benefits

Lessons from Project Help Californians Recycle Paint and Create Jobs

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STOCKTON, Calif., March 1, 2011 -- /PRNewswire/ -- In April, San Joaquin County will end a two-year paint project funded by a grant from the Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery (CalRecycle) that has shown statewide benefits and proves that paint recycling is good for the environment and for local businesses. The information gained from the project is being shared with paint manufacturers who are ready to roll-out a statewide paint recycling program in 2012.

In 2009, San Joaquin County teamed up with San Francisco and rural Tehama County to develop the Be Paint Wi\$e Partnership and create a comprehensive pilot project to address leftover paint management, which currently costs San Joaquin County nearly \$500,000 a year to manage.

Sadly, less than ten percent of California households properly manage leftover paint because there are very few options available. "We can't reasonably raise garbage rates, taxes or tipping fees high enough to accommodate more paint and other hazardous product waste," explains Desi Reno, San Joaquin County's Integrated Waste Manager. "We want to provide consumers a convenient and cost-effective solution to recycle paint, but we realize there has to be a better way, which is why we took on this grant project to show that product stewardship *is* a better way to manage paint."

The pilot project was divided into five objectives: educating consumers on buying the right amount of paint; fostering recycled paint purchases; creating a retail-take back program for leftover paint; encouraging paint reuse; and preparing for the statewide paint stewardship program roll out.

To educate consumers on how to buy the right amount, the grant team developed consumer education materials in English and Spanish, which were distributed to ninety-nine paint retailers in the three participating counties. A consumer focus group revealed that most consumers didn't know paint cannot be landfilled in California, nor were they aware that local hazardous waste programs existed or that high quality recycled-content paint is readily available, at a fraction of the cost of traditional paint.

Establishing retail paint collection locations proved to be a tremendous success. The project team recruited 21 retail collection sites in the three counties, with each site agreeing to take back and recycle latex paint from the public at no charge. To date, residents have recycled more than 8,000 gallons of latex paint – saving the counties more than \$65,000 in paint management costs. Consumers and retailers alike are pleased with the program results.

"We have been really surprised to see how much paint people have stored. This is a great community service and it's benefiting us as well. The program is convenient and easy to do and we've seen increased customer traffic because of it," said Bud Schemper, owner of Schemper's

Ace Hardware in Ripon.

The project team also surveyed paint retailers in all three counties to identify both the barriers and motivators to participating in retail take-back. In San Francisco, lack of space was the primary barrier, while other stores in the three counties indicated concerns about illegal dumping and others cited fear of regulatory requirements. "We're happy to report that there have been no incidents of illegal dumping as some sites feared," says Kimbra Andrews, San Joaquin County HHW Program Coordinator. "This is an important finding as the program is rolled out statewide because we have good evidence that illegal dumping is not an issue."

Doug Wilhoit, CEO of the Greater Stockton Chamber of Commerce, relates the economic benefits of both the local and statewide programs. "We're seeing the benefits of product stewardship in our County thanks to this project. Participating paint retailers have seen increased customer traffic and that's a great thing in this economy. We also expect to see a growth in green jobs, particularly in the paint recycling industry. Once again San Joaquin County is leading the way and we expect other communities will see the same benefits when the program is rolled out statewide July 1, 2012."

In addition to starting retail collection sites for leftover paint, the project team identified potential paint reuse or "paint swap" sites in the three counties. Paint swaps are free or low-cost programs where residents can drop off latex paint that is in good condition and others can pick up the paint for their use. Three new paint swap sites were added: one at the Tracy Color Center in San Joaquin County and two others in Tehama County. Kristina Miller, Tehama County/Red Bluff Sanitary Landfill Agency Manager explained the importance of paint swaps. "This is an excellent way for our County to reduce paint management costs. We spend upwards of \$30,000 per year managing leftover paint – much of which can and should be reused. That's a lot of money for our small County."

San Joaquin County also offers a free paint swap at their HHW facility, which is so popular that most of the paint is gone by the end of each day. San Joaquin County is also working with Visions Paint Recycling of Sacramento to develop a recycled content paint made from paint recycled by San Joaquin County residents that meets the stringent Green Seal Certification requirements for recycled paint.

For the final objective, the project team is working with PaintCare, the paint industry's stewardship organization that will manage California's statewide program, to share the lessons learned from the paint project. "We are working to design a program that is efficient and cost-effective and which benefits all stakeholders," said Alison Keane, PaintCare Executive Director. The project team has coordinated a series of free webinars on this subject. The final webinar will be held on March 23rd from 10:00 – 11:30 am (PST) and is open to the public.

Registration information will be posted on CPSC's website at <http://www.calpsc.org/webinars/index.html> as the date nears.

"This has been a great project to be involved with," said Heidi Sanborn. "We believe that product stewardship is the answer to underfunded and inconvenient government programs and it has been exciting to help prove what is possible with public-private partnerships. We have listened to all stakeholders and designed a program that balances the needs of consumers, retailers, local government and the paint industry. And we're creating jobs in California so both people and the environment win."

More information on this project is available at <http://www.calpsc.org/projects/SanJoaquin-HD17.html>.

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SOURCE California Product Stewardship Council