

**T-2.1**  
**SWANA TECHNICAL POLICY**

**PRODUCT STEWARDSHIP**

**I. BACKGROUND**

As a general concept, product stewardship is defined as a product-centered approach to environmental protection that calls on all those in the product life cycle – designers, manufacturers, retailers, users and waste managers -- to share responsibility and costs for reducing the adverse environmental impacts of products.

From SWANA’s specific perspective, product stewardship involves the actions taken to provide for waste management of the product at the end of its useful life. These include:

1. actions to improve the design and manufacture of products to facilitate either their reuse, recycling or disposal, and
2. actions to establish programs to collect, process and reuse or recycle products when they are discarded.

Product stewardship calls on product manufacturers to take on new responsibilities to reduce the adverse impact of their products and to include the costs of reuse, recycling or disposal in the price of the product. However, all participants in a product life cycle including retailers, consumers and waste managers have important roles to play working in cooperation with product manufacturers to develop the most workable and cost-effective solutions. Government legislators and regulators have the important role of establishing policies and programs to encourage product stewardship.

The Board of Directors of SWANA’s Massachusetts Chapter initiated the development of a product stewardship policy in the fall of 2000, and the MA Chapter’s draft policy was placed on the agenda and discussed by the International Board of Directors (“IB”) of SWANA at its mid-year meeting in June 2001. To obtain input to the policy, two Product Stewardship Forums were held with outside organizations including the U.S. EPA, the Electronics Industries Association, the Institute for Scrap Recycling Industries, the American Plastics Council and the National Solid Waste Management Association. Written comments were received from several organizations including the National Product Stewardship Institute, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, Alberta Environment and Corporations Supporting Recycling.

**II. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy on product stewardship is to establish guiding principles for SWANA and its members to use as they collaborate with manufacturers, retailers, consumers, regulators, legislators and waste managers, in developing programs to safely, cost-effectively and appropriately manage products at the end of their life. This policy is developed to fit within the broader Principles of Product Stewardship developed by the Product Stewardship Institute but focuses primarily on the solid waste management aspects of the concept, i.e. the actions taken to

reduce the impacts from disposal of various products and to encourage the reuse, recovery and recycling of such products. For purposes of this policy, SWANA's priority is on those products that, due to the materials they contain or other characteristics, require special collection, handling, recycling or disposal procedures, that are different from the conventional solid waste management practices carried out or arranged by local governments.

### **III. SWANA'S GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF PRODUCT STEWARDSHIP**

It is in the best interest of Federal, state, provincial and local governments, industries, environmental groups, and consumers to reduce the adverse impacts of consumer products. To achieve this result, product stewardship efforts aim to encourage manufacturers to take increasing responsibility to reduce the entire life-cycle impacts of a product and its packaging – energy and materials consumption, air and water emissions, the amount of potential pollutants in the product, worker safety, and waste disposal – in product design and in the end-of-life management of the products they produce.

#### **A. Responsibility**

The responsibility for reducing product impacts should be shared among industry (designers, manufacturers, and retailers of products or product components), government, and consumers. The greater the ability an entity or person has to minimize a product's life-cycle impacts, the greater is its degree of responsibility, and opportunity, for addressing those impacts.

#### **B. Internalize Costs**

Under an all encompassing product stewardship approach, all product lifecycle costs – from using resources, to reducing health and environmental impacts throughout the production process, to managing products at the end of life – would be included in the total product cost.

However, as stated above, SWANA's priority is on products due to the materials they contain or other characteristics, require special collection, handling, recycling or disposal procedures, that are different from the conventional solid waste management practices carried out or arranged by local governments. For those products, the costs of product collection, reuse, recycling and disposal should be minimized, to the greatest extent possible, for local, provincial and state governments and shifted to the manufacturers and consumers of products.

#### **C. Incentives For More Environmentally Sound Products And Sustainable Management Practices**

Policies that promote and implement product stewardship principles should create incentives for the manufacturer to design and produce products that are made using less energy, materials, and potential pollutants, and which result in less waste (through reduction, reuse, recycling, and composting) and use less energy to operate. These policies should also create incentives for the development of a sustainable and environmentally-sound system to collect, reuse, and recycle or dispose of products at the end of their lives.

#### **D. Flexible Management Strategies**

Those that are responsible for reducing the impacts of products should have flexibility in determining how to most effectively address those impacts. The performance of responsible parties

shall be measured by the achievement of goal-oriented results. Voluntary stewardship programs should be encouraged and facilitated. In any case, timelines should be reasonable and achievable so that new methods for managing materials are in place before restrictions are placed on the old ones.

#### **E. Roles And Relationships**

Industry should provide leadership in realizing these principles through voluntary stewardship programs. Government should provide leadership in promoting the practices of product stewardship through procurement, technical assistance, clarification of the criteria and measurements for stewardship requirements, evaluation and recognition of voluntary programs, education, market development, agency coordination and harmonization. State, provincial and federal governments should also address regulatory barriers and, where necessary, provide regulatory incentives, disincentives or restrictions. Industry and government shall provide – and consumers should take full advantage of – information needed to make responsible purchasing, reuse, recycling, and disposal decisions.

#### **IV. SWANA's ROLE**

As a major association for solid waste professionals, with this policy as guidance, SWANA will promote the principles in its dissemination of information and training and in its advocacy role as a voice for the profession.

Approved by the International Board on October 14, 2001.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Allen Lynch', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Allen Lynch, International Secretary

Dated October 14, 2001