

Online Resource 3 Strategies for Effective Public Education and Waste Reduction

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(This is a full version of the report summarized in Section 5 of the report)

This section summarizes recommendations and/or findings related to developing or implementing community outreach aimed at greenhouse gas reduction:

- A. The results of a greenhouse gas public opinion survey
- B. Messaging for helping the public, institutions and businesses minimize their GHG emissions
- C. The environmental and economic benefits of Extended Producer Responsibility

A. GHG Survey Summary

OCRRA commissioned OpinionWorks of Annapolis, MD to conduct a public opinion survey among residents of Onondaga County, NY to measure attitudes and household practices on issues related to greenhouse gas emissions, use of plastic bags, product packaging, and reuse of products. OpinionWorks drew a random sample of adult residents of Onondaga County and completed a total of 500 interviews by telephone November 29 – December 9, 2008 (sampling error of $\pm 4.4\%$ at the 95% confidence level). Interviews averaged 10 minutes in length and consisted of 48 questions. After the interviews were collected, the sample was weighted to reflect as closely as possible the underlying demographics within the City of Syracuse and for Onondaga County as a whole for race/ethnicity, age, and gender, based where possible on the latest population estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau.

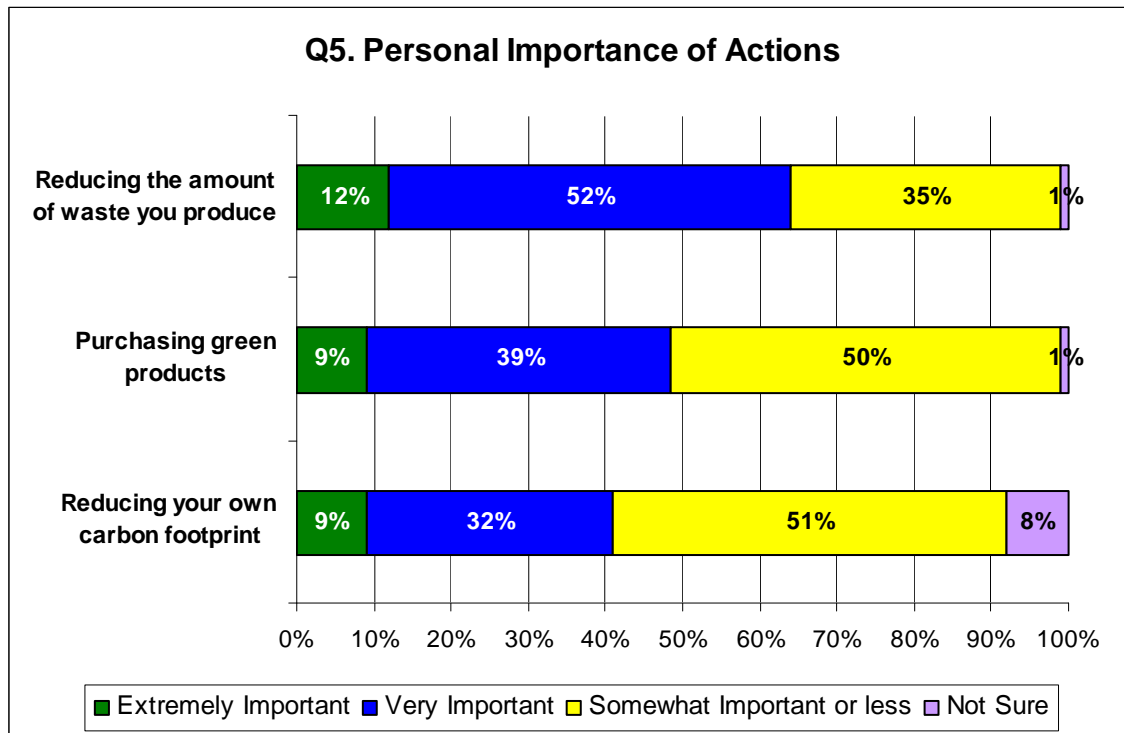
Summary Points

- Onondaga County is strongly **tuned in to environmental concerns**.
- A large majority believe their **lifestyle choices can make a big difference** on the issues discussed in this survey. They see strong **links between reducing greenhouse gas emissions and both recycling and minimizing waste**.
- **Economic messages** right now are the **most powerful**.
- **Making plastic bags more expensive to use is** the single most **powerful** inducement to discourage their use, among five different ideas tested.
- Among these who say the amount of packaging makes a big difference to them, there is good **willingness to contact manufacturers to urge them to use less packaging**.
- Women, residents under 35, and those with the highest education levels consistently demonstrate throughout the survey that they **are more receptive to messages** on the issues discussed in this survey.
- **Carbon footprint** as a concept **has not caught on yet** in the broad general public.

Please see the results of select findings from the opinion survey on the following pages . . .

Select Findings

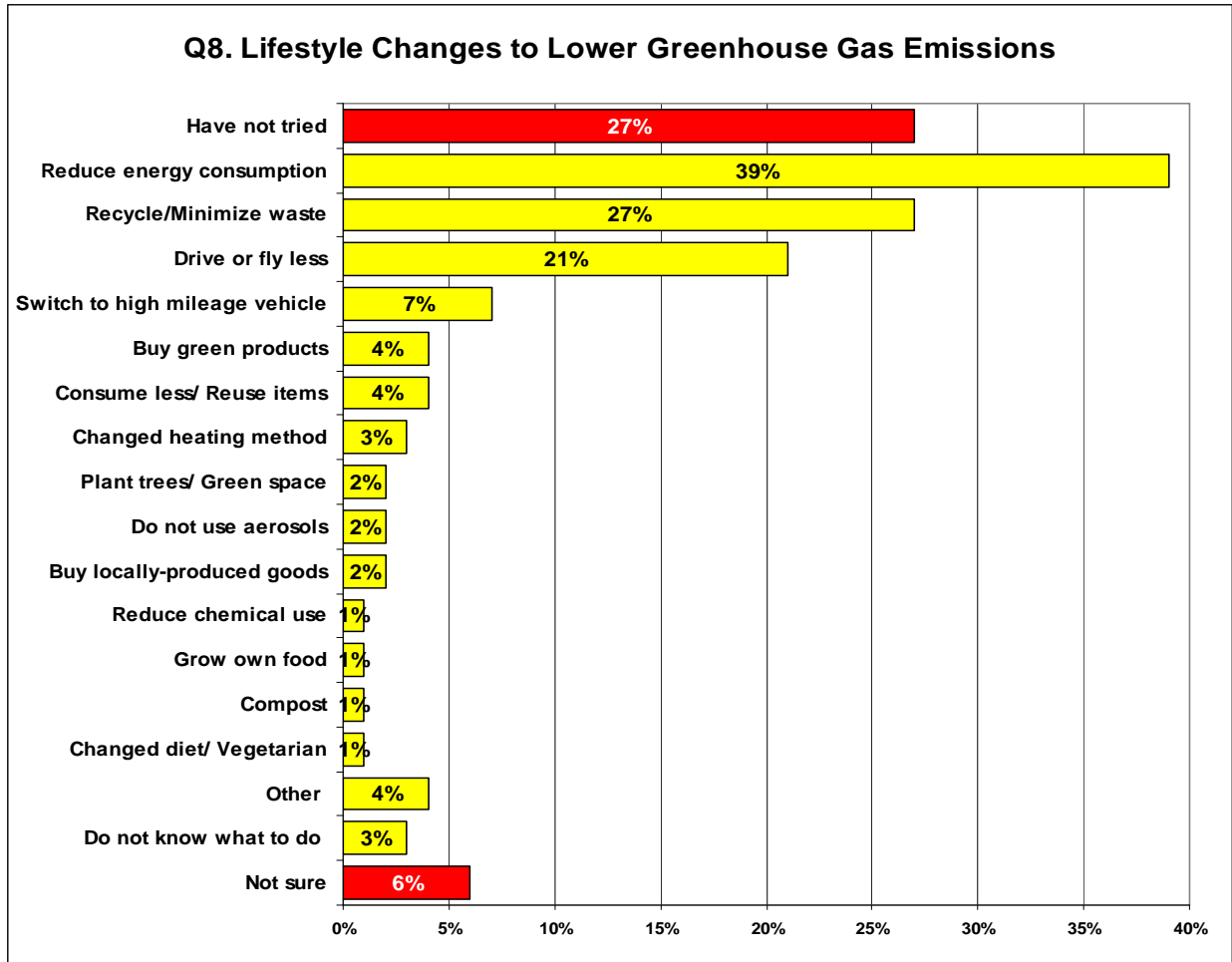
- Three-quarters (74%) of County residents believe “small lifestyle changes in your own household can have a real impact on the kinds of problems” discussed in this survey.
 - Only 22% say “it won’t make much of a dent in these problems no matter what you do.” That means that a large majority of the public is ready and willing to be engaged on these issues.
- Q: “Using that same scale, (extremely important, very important, somewhat important, not too important, or not at all important) how important is each of these things to you personally?”



Greenhouse Gas Emissions

- Three-quarters of the County’s residents say they are at least somewhat familiar with the issue of greenhouse gas emissions.
- The overwhelming view in Onondaga County, held by 83% of residents, is that “humans are contributing to the build-up of greenhouse gas.”
- Two-thirds of the County’s residents (67%) say they have tried to make “lifestyle changes to lower your own household’s greenhouse gas emissions.”

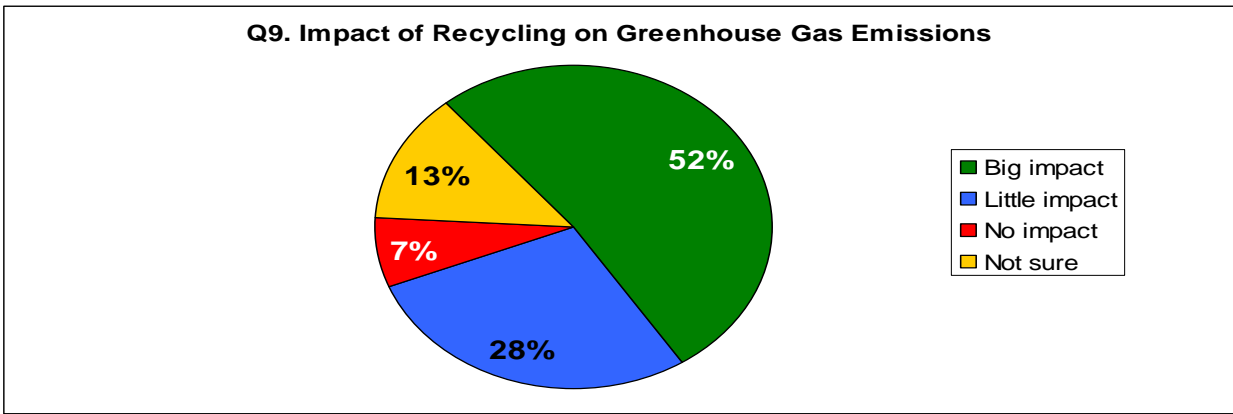
Q: “Have you actually tried to make any lifestyle changes to lower your own household’s greenhouse gas emissions?” (If yes): “What specifically have you thought about doing?” (Probe; do not read list.)



It should be noted that this was an open-ended question, so the list was not read to respondents.

- **Residents see a link between recycling and lowering greenhouse gas emissions**
- Women are 10 percentage points more likely than men to say recycling can have a big impact. City of Syracuse residents are 10 points more likely than rural residents to see a big impact, as well. Other indicators such as age and education do not show a relationship on this question.

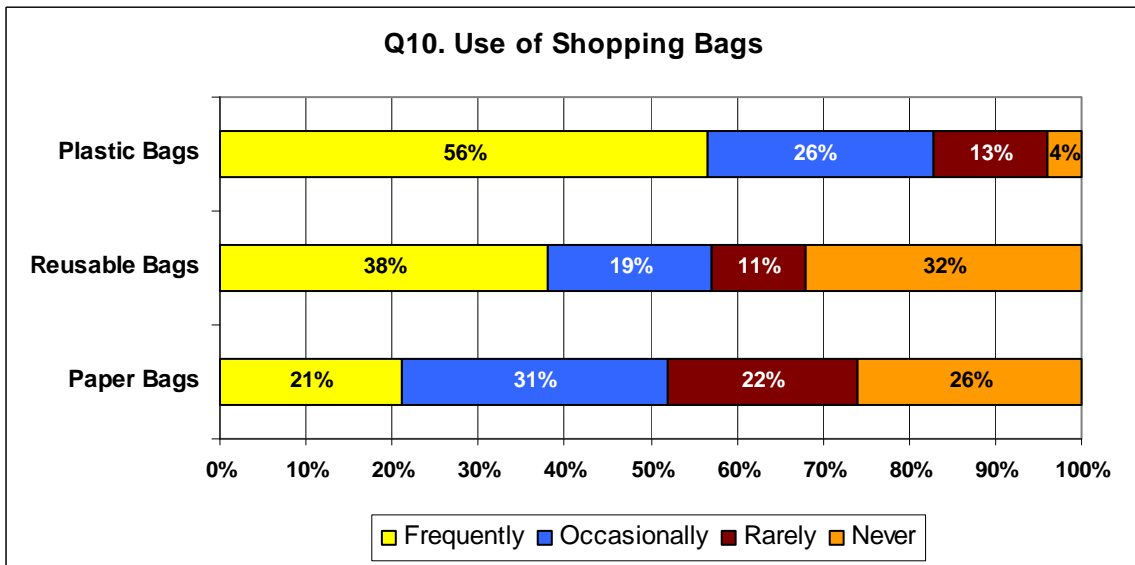
Q: “As far as you know, would more recycling have a big impact, a little impact, or no impact on lowering greenhouse gas emissions?”



Plastic Bags

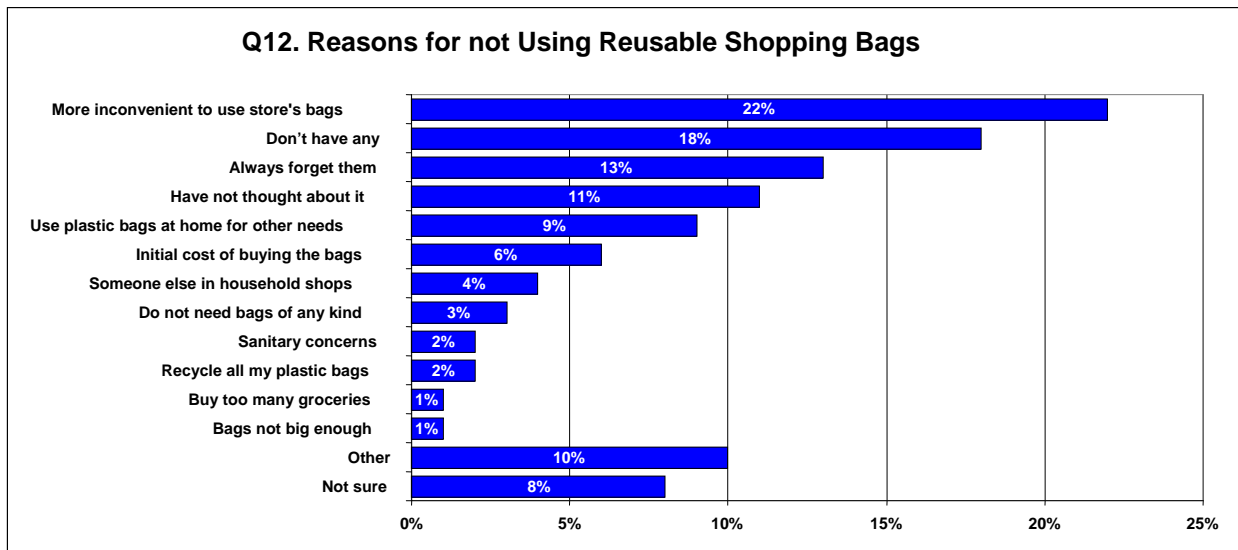
- Not surprisingly, plastic bags are the most-used type of shopping bags in the County when buying “groceries or other basic household items.”

Q: “When you shop for groceries or other basic household items, how often do you use each of these kinds of bags, using the scale: frequently, occasionally, rarely, or never?” *(Read list.)*



- There is some evidence in the survey that many people who consider themselves good environmentalists are still using plastic bags frequently, as well. Over half (52%) of County residents who view environmental protection as a top or above average priority frequently use plastic bags. This suggests that some active messaging about plastic bags is needed with the environmental base.
- As the underlying economic conditions might indicate, making plastic bags more expensive to use is the single most powerful inducement to discourage their use, among five different ideas tested.

Q: “You mentioned that you {rarely/never} use reusable bags from home. Why not?”



As part of the committee's effort to encourage greenhouse gas reduction via waste minimization, 4,800 reusable grocery bags were purchased and distributed. **This outreach activity relates well to the survey result that 18% of people who don't use reusable grocery bags do so because they don't own them.**

The reusable grocery bags were distributed a special community events and at OCRRRA's Community Collection Center (C3). Residents taking one of the free bags at C3 are asked to sign a pledge to "use reusable shopping bags whenever and wherever they can." The pledge is also a vehicle for collecting e-mail addresses so that subsequent community outreach via the internet can be conducted to pledge signers to highlight recycling and waste reduction information.

Excess Packaging

- Naturally, the cost of a household product is a big factor when making a purchasing decision.
- Among these who say the amount of packaging makes a big difference to them, there is good willingness to contact manufacturers to urge them to use less packaging.

Q: "Please tell me if each of these makes a big difference, a little difference, or no difference to you when you are choosing a household product like laundry detergent, electronics, or a child's toy."

Q15. Influence on Product Purchases

	Big Difference	Little Difference	Total
The cost of the product	77%	15%	92%
Knowing the packaging can be recycled	52%	27%	79%
The brand name of the product	30%	43%	73%
The amount of packaging	33%	35%	68%

B. Messaging Recommendations and Public Communications

The following recommendations are excerpted from a report developed by Mary Witkowski, Outreach Intern, December 2008 (please see Online Resource 3 for further details and findings):

- Develop and implement a green business certification program.
- Waste reduction tips and strategies in a website format would be most helpful to businesses. Businesses don't want to receive more paper.
- To make information easily accessible for businesses, tips and strategies for waste reduction should be organized by business sector. (Please see online resource: Institutional waste minimization: A guide for Hospitality Professionals in Onondaga County)
- Featuring case studies to the website (to be added to the new website as businesses qualify) not only gives businesses recognition, but is a source of information for other businesses looking for new strategies and tips.

In sync with these recommendations, OCRRA is launching a new web portal to help local businesses and institutions recycle more, reduce more, and consequently reduce their GHG impacts. Please visit: <http://www.BlueRibbonRecycler.com/>

The online portal offers a recycling certification program and suggests implementation of various waste reduction and recycling efforts in the workplace to help businesses reduce greenhouse gasses and support sustainable practices. The site will showcase best practices implemented by businesses that have received the certification as local best-in-class models of recycling and waste reduction excellence. Businesses receiving the certification will receive a certificate suitable for framing, a window decal, a digital file for use on company websites/letterhead, and a letter certifying their recycling practice for use in promoting their services or products to current and potential clients.



GHG Committee Concurs on Focusing on Businesses and Institutions

The GHG committee concurred that focusing OCRRA's recycling and waste reduction message on large generators of fiber (businesses, schools, and institutions) was most likely to produce the largest waste reduction and minimization impacts, and thereby most effectively reduce GHG (versus a GHG outreach focus on a household level). The Agency's website does not disregard waste reduction in the home; for example, information on reducing junk mail in the home and at work is featured at www.ocrra.org/recycling_creditoffers.asp. For maximum impact, the committee sees commercial sector as the target for recycling and waste minimization messages.

C. Extended Producer Responsibility

“The greenhouse gas reduction potential of waste prevention and recycling is huge.”

Source: Product Policy Institute (PPI)

PPI works with local governments and community organizations to build support for effective

Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), or Product Stewardship,
policies that hold producers responsible for ensuring that their products do not become public liabilities

With an eye towards longer range efforts to promote recycling and minimize waste, and thereby reduce greenhouse gasses, OCRRA has taken an active role in promoting Extended Producer Responsibility legislation. The objective: Manufacturers will design and market products that are easier to manage and recycle at the end of their useful life. Implementing EPR legislation would relieve local tax payers and rate payers from the cost of collecting and processing these materials for safe disposal, recycling, or reuse. Sustaining these costs on an ongoing basis is an unreasonable financial burden for municipal solid waste programs. If manufactures were financially connected to the end of life management of their products, they would surely design safer, easier to recycle goods. The environmental benefits would include:

- 1) The extraction rate of natural resources, including foreign oil, precious metals, and iron ore, needed for the manufacture of new materials, would decrease,
- 2) ***The generation of greenhouse gasses associated with those energy-intensive mining processes would decrease,*** and
- 3) The quantity of heavy metals and other toxic/hazardous components entering the waste stream would decrease.

According to the Product Policy Institute (online at www.productpolicy.org) “By requiring manufacturers to take responsibility for managing their products and packaging waste, government agencies can relieve themselves of the time and cost of arranging for recycling and proper disposal of hazardous materials. EPR also stimulates the creation of a reverse distribution infrastructure that is best equipped to ensure efficient product collection, reuse and recycling. Some companies – such as Hewlett-Packard and Xerox – have integrated product and packaging recovery systems into their manufacturing plants, while others have contracted with outside recyclers. ***Ultimately, purchasing from manufacturers that take physical or financial responsibility for their products and packaging will encourage them to redesign their goods to be devoid of toxic chemicals, long-lasting, minimally packaged, and easily recyclable.*** Finally, by factoring end-of-life management into the overall cost of owning a product, purchasers can identify brands that offer the best overall value.”

OCRRA Action

Specific OCRRA action has included the passage of Board Resolution 1662 of 2009, supporting “statewide efforts to hold producers responsible for hazardous product discard management and other product waste management costs . . .”. The resolution urges the State of New York and its member agencies to include EPR language , such as specifying product and packaging collection and recycling requirements, in contracts for commodities. The resolution and supporting letter has been distributed to state senate and assembly elected officials in Albany.

Current Legislative Status

The NYS Assembly passed EPR legislation (A.7571) on 5/5/09. The Governor is in favor of a statewide EPR structure and provided an EPR program bill (#44). The EPR bill in the senate (S.6047) was not acted upon in the spring 2009 session and may be reconsidered in the fall of 2009.