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SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE/
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March 4, 2009

Ms. Nancy Sutley, Chair
White House Council on Environmental Quality
722 Jackson Place, NW
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Ms. Sutley:

CONVERSION TECHNOLOGIES: AN OPPORTUNITY TO ENHANCE OUR ENVIRONMENT, IMPROVE OUR ENERGY INDEPENDENCE, AND STIMULATE OUR ECONOMY

On behalf of the Los Angeles County Integrated Waste Management Task Force (Task Force), I want to applaud President Obama for his commitment to stimulating our economy and improving our environment through the deployment of alternative and renewable energy technologies. Not only will this create thousands of green-collar jobs and address the global climate crisis, but simultaneously reduce our addiction to foreign oil. As your team sets out to implement the President's New Energy for America Plan, I'd like to take the opportunity to share with you our efforts to evaluate and promote new solid waste conversion technologies, and the promising findings we have developed after extensive research.

Pursuant to Chapter 3.67 of the Los Angeles County Code and the California Integrated Waste Management Act of 1989 (AB 939, as amended), the Task Force is responsible for coordinating the development of all major solid waste planning documents prepared for the County of Los Angeles and the 88 cities in Los Angeles County with a combined population in excess of ten million. Consistent with these responsibilities, and to ensure a coordinated and cost-effective and environmentally-sound solid waste management system in Los Angeles County, the Task Force also addresses issues impacting the system on a countywide basis. The Task Force membership includes representatives of the League of California Cities-Los Angeles County Division, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, the City of Los Angeles, the waste management industry, environmental groups, the public, and a number of other governmental agencies.

Conversion technologies are processes that extract valuable resources and create renewable energy from solid waste. Conversion technologies may be thermal, chemical or biological but are not incinerators – there's no combustion of the waste. Over 140

operating facilities are successfully processing solid waste in Europe and Japan; however no commercial facility has been constructed in the United States. The Task Force along with other entities, including the City and the County of Los Angeles, have extensively evaluated various conversion technologies from around the world, and concluded that these technologies can fundamentally change the way we manage waste, diverting up to 100 percent of the waste from landfill disposal, producing significant quantities of renewable energy and biofuels from that waste, preventing emissions - including greenhouse gas emissions - that otherwise would have been produced, and most significantly, creating high-tech green collar jobs.

The Task Force would like to emphasize the following demonstrated benefits of conversion technologies:

1. **Conversion technologies can create green collar jobs and spur the economy** - Conversion technologies would create a range of new, high tech jobs and contribute to the local economy by creating new advanced infrastructure.
2. **Conversion technologies can decrease net air emissions and greenhouse gases** - In February 2008, California Air Resources Board's Economic and Technology Advancement Advisory Committee (ETAAC) released its report entitled "*Technologies and Policies to Consider for Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions in California*". The ETAAC Report noted that by conservative estimates, conversion technologies have the potential to reduce annual greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by approximately five million metric tons of CO₂ equivalent in California. In fact, the Task Force estimates the potential GHG reduction of conversion technologies may be three times greater, since conversion technologies have a simultaneous triple benefit to the environment: (1) reduction of transportation emissions resulting from long distance shipping of waste; (2) elimination of methane production from waste that would otherwise be landfilled; and (3) displacement of the use of fossil fuels by net energy (fuel and electricity) produced by conversion technologies.
3. **Conversion technologies can produce renewable energy and green fuels, thereby reducing our dependence on foreign oil** - Conversion technologies produce fuel and/or energy. By utilizing conversion technologies, California and other states can develop clean, locally-produced renewable energy and green fuels, including ethanol, biodiesel, and electricity, which can be used to promote energy

independence. Benefits from this independence include insulating residents from energy markets fluctuations, and avoiding environmental impacts associated with the extraction, refining, transportation, and combustion of fuels.

4. **Conversion technologies are an effective and environmentally preferable alternative to landfilling** - Based on reports developed by the State of California Integrated Waste Management Board, the County of Los Angeles, and other independent agencies, conversion technologies are environmentally preferable to land disposal practices. Copies of these reports are available at www.SoCalConversion.org. While economically the cost of utilizing conversion technologies may exceed current landfill disposal rates, disposal costs are expected to increase as landfill capacity declines within the coming decade. Development of conversion technologies is needed now to provide decision makers with environmentally preferable and economically viable options for the management of post-recycled waste materials.
5. **Conversion technologies can manage materials that are not practically recyclable and at the same time create an incentive to increase recycling** - Not all solid waste currently disposed can be recycled or composted. Contaminated organic materials, higher number plastics and other materials, which cannot be recycled or processed in an economically feasible manner, are ideal feedstock for conversion technologies. At the same time, inorganic materials including glass, metals and aggregate have no value for conversion technologies, and therefore create an incentive to separate and recover those materials for recycling prior to the conversion process.

Currently underway, the Southern California Conversion Technology Demonstration Project, an endeavor spearheaded by Los Angeles County and the Task Force, seeks to develop a highly-efficient conversion technology facility onsite with a materials recovery facility (MRF). The conversion technology facility will complement the MRF by utilizing the residuals (the waste remaining after all recyclables are removed) for beneficial use rather than sending them to a landfill. The goal of this project is to demonstrate the technical, environmental and economic benefits of conversion technologies. Upon successful operation, the project would showcase the viability of these technologies and spur private investment.

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In your previous role as Environmental Deputy for Mayor Antonio Villaragosa, you are no doubt well-versed in the City of Los Angeles' RENEW LA Plan, which focuses on developing alternative technologies in an effort to diversify our solid waste management system, produce much-needed resources and create jobs during this economic downturn. The Task Force would welcome the opportunity to meet with your staff in person or via conference call to share more with your team about conversion technologies and their potential role in the President's New Energy for America Plan. If you have any questions, please contact Mr. Mike Mohajer of the Task Force at (909) 592-1147.

Sincerely,

Margaret Clark

Margaret Clark, Vice-Chair
Los Angeles County Solid Waste Management Committee/
Integrated Waste Management Task Force and
Council Member, City of Rosemead

TM/CS:ca
P: sec\taskforce\letters\lf letter Nancy Sutley

cc: Senator Dianne Feinstein
Senator Barbara Boxer
Carol Browner, Special Assistant to the President
Secretary of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Each Member of the Los Angeles County U.S. House of Representatives
Each Member of the County of Los Angeles' Board of Supervisors
Each City Mayor in Los Angeles County
Southern California Association of Governments
South Bay Cities Council of Governments
San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments
Gateway Cities Council of Governments
Each Member of the Los Angeles County Integrated Waste Management Task Force
Each Member of the Los Angeles County Alternative Technology Advisory Subcommittee