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EBC and Mass. DEP present the C&D Debris Summit

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On January 16th the Environmental Business Council of N.E. and the Mass. Department of Environmental Protection will host their 3rd Annual Construction and Demolition (C&D) Debris Regional Summit, sponsored by Beveridge & Diamond PC and Mackie Shea O'Brien PC. This year's Summit will explore opportunities and markets for recycled C&D debris throughout the N.E. region, not just in Mass. The EBC and DEP expect another sell out audience of builders, architects, contractors, government officials, recyclers and waste management executives.

The Summit will be kicked off by Laurie Burt, commissioner of the Mass. DEP and Bruce Parker, president of the National Solid Waste Management Association. Commissioner Burt is expected to speak about the DEP's planned conversion of its solid waste master plan to a "materials management" plan and the role that C&D recycling can play under the new regime. Parker is expected to give a national update.

The Summit will explore what steps can and should be taken to extend the market for recycled C&D materials beyond Mass. to the entire N.E. region and ultimately to the entire nation. Officials from a wide range of C&D recycling enterprises will describe market opportunities and obstacles, and make recommendations for increased recycling in the region. Government regulators from N.H. and Mass. will describe expected developments in their C&D regulations and markets. And international speakers from Denmark and Canada will share their observations on how the region can take advantage of cross border opportunities.

To date, Mass. has led the nation in development of C&D recycling infrastructure. However, C&D recycling is capital intensive and markets can be volatile. The recent economic slow down has contributed to a drop in commodity prices which has a direct impact on the economics of recycling. Broadening the markets for recycled C&D materials is critical to the ultimate success of this endeavor.

Speakers will address the role of private sector based and regulatory based programs in the market. The LEED program and government mandates, such as bans on disposal of recyclable waste materials, have stimulated the development of a robust C&D recycling infrastructure in Massachusetts. Builders and contractors seeking LEED certification can gain points by recycling C&D debris and using building products with recycled content. C&D recyclers will verify recycling rates for purposes of LEED certification. Recycling C&D also reduces greenhouse gas emissions. The Summit will explore how these positives can be used to support a more robust market for recycled C&D materials.

The Summit will explore the possibility for increased consistency among the various states to encourage more recycling. Historically a creature of local regulation, there is little national or regional consistency in the regulation of solid waste or recycling. Each state in N.E. has its own set of regulations governing these areas. Similarly, the states have markedly different grant, loan and

other incentive programs. Even Mass.' program of recycling grants and incentives changes from year to year due to shifting budget priorities and funding. The Summit will begin the conversation on exploiting these opportunities for greater consistency and coordination from year to year and state to state.

The Summit will also explore the opportunities presented by the free flow of recyclable materials across state borders. Although recycling and waste management are regulated on a state by state basis, wastes and recyclable materials cross state borders in interstate commerce. No state exercises complete control over the management of wastes or recyclables generated within its borders (or for that matter, disposed within its borders). For example, Mass. exports approximately 1.4 million tons of waste each year, much of this to far away disposal facilities in S.C., Virginia and western N.E. state. Recycling markets also cross borders. For instance, the primary market for wood removed from the C&D waste stream in Mass. are power plants in Northern Maine while a new market is opening in Canada, north of the N.E. border.

Speakers will identify means to remove market destabilizers. C&D recyclers and regulators contend daily with a shifting market landscape. For example, in 2007, the Conn. legislature passed renewable energy legislation that stripped renewable energy credits from the Maine power plants which had been accepting Mass. C&D wood. As a result of this Conn. legislation the Maine power plants stopped paying for C&D wood which had a ripple effect on Mass. C&D recyclers who lost their wood outlet virtually overnight. Add to this confusing array of changing policies the recent increase in diesel fuel costs and one can begin to understand the challenges posed to a C&D recycler or regulator attempting to make sense of the market. By beginning a dialogue between the states the Summit can hopefully help to reduce the ups and downs of the market.

The Summit will also focus on opportunities that exist to achieve greater consistency within individual states. For example, the DEP has been discussing the possibility of a ban on disposal of asphalt shingles, a substantial component of the C&D waste stream. Recyclers have identified a potential market for reuse of asphalt shingles in highway construction as either road base or part of the asphalt mix. However, the current Mass Highway specification for state highways does not account for use of recycled asphalt shingles. DEP officials will discuss their progress in attempting to change the Mass Highway spec and its relevance to the "Materials Management" plan.

International speakers will also lend their insights for improvement of N.E. and United States' markets. A Danish recycler of gypsum wallboard powder will contrast how his company recycles new and used wallboard in Europe with few constraints with its start up experience here in Mass. Likewise, a Canadian pressboard manufacturer will describe how his company is building the world's largest pressboard plant in Quebec and plans to exploit the large supply of wood in N.E.

The Environmental Business Council invites you to participate in this exciting opportunity to develop a regional recycling economy. To register for the Summit, please contact Julia Hughes at jhughes@ebcne.org.

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