Recommendations from Ad Hoc Agricultural Film Recycling Subcommittee

Evidence collected during the past six months has confirmed that market conditions and equipment technology have improved enough to recommend that WI move forward with some innovative and needed ag film recycling enhancement projects this fall.

1) Ag Film Webinar: To bring agency staff, the dairy sector, solid waste/recycling managers, farm organizations, and others current on the latest news and knowledge on ag film recycling opportunities and methods, a 90-minute webinar is proposed for October 2013. The Solid and Hazardous Waste Education Center- UW Extension has agreed to provide the webinar platform and Joe Van Rossum will be serving as program host. Principal topics for discussion would include an end markets update, case studies of proven collection methods, a baler demonstration review, and planning for local ag film recycling. A draft program is attached to this summary.

2) Baler Demonstration: Finding appropriate-sized and qualified baling equipment for films, especially silo bags and bunker covers, has remained a natty problem for years. End markets are only willing to pickup truck-load quantities of baled films and there are only a small number of horizontal, floor-mounted balers in WI operated by public/private MRFs and transfer facilities. A number of densification options, (e.g. shredding, compacting, grain bag winders) remain available for potential testing, but one particular option, a “cuber” built by Durabuilt from Missouri is of particular interest. Lindsey Smith from TerreCon working with Durabuilt has agreed to demonstrate the value of this baler for smaller farm applications. Assuming Missouri tests prove well in September, the baler would be brought to southern WI in October for actual baling and then reported on during the Oct. 15th webinar.

3) Ag Film Recycling Manual: Ag film recycling has been an on again/off again endeavor in WI for the past eight years and it has often been made possible by the passionate commitment of local agency staff, (e.g. MRF managers, Extension staff, LCD staff). Now that market conditions and technology are moving forward again, a more efficient way of sharing “what works” must be considered if permanent progress is to be made. What works in one area may have no chance of working in another. Hence what would be incredibly helpful is a manual that reviews the kind of thinking and planning that must go into successful ag film recycling. Considerations must be given to the size of local farms, the amount of education/training needed to improve in-field cleaning, the presence of transfer or consolidation sites, the kind of balers available in the area, etc. It would also be very helpful to review the types of balers or densification equipment that have proven useful for ag film recycling. When this information is brought together in a manual, a permanent, practical guide would be available to help agency staff and farm organizations provide leadership and direction for local ag film recycling. It is suggested that a coordinating team consisting of UWEX staff and experienced ag film recyclers convene to provide an outline and framework for undertaking this project.