

Board backs change in recycling costs

By WALT COOK
The Union Democrat

Tuolumne County has joined a collective governmental effort to put some of the costs associated with recycling and hazard waste disposal onto manufacturers.

The Board of Supervisors voted unanimously last week to support Assembly Bill 23 — also known as the Extended Producer Responsibility Bill — under consideration by legislators.

The move was recommended by the county's Solid Waste manager, Gretchen Olsen.

Earlier this year, represen-

tatives from the Sacramento-based California Product Stewardship Council met with supervisors and urged their support for the bill.

"The bill," Olsen said, "would require the state to adopt regulations that would put more responsibility on the producers and manufacturers of products to insure that they minimize packaging, reduce toxic content and plan, implement and cover costs for end-of-life disposal as these products become waste."

Per federal and state mandates, local governments are saddled with the burden of recycling and disposing of toxic

products, according to Olsen. However, she said, the mandates aren't funded.

Tuolumne County spends \$250,000 per year alone to deal with hazardous waste, ranging from old paint to television sets past their prime, according to Olsen. Meanwhile, manufacturers get off the hook.

Heidi Sanborn of the Product Stewardship told supervisors at a recent meeting that a "paradigm shift" is needed when it comes to solid waste disposal because "the waste stream has changed dramatically."

"There's more waste that's coming at you than ever before," she said.

According to Sanborn, manufactured goods make up 75 percent of the waste stream. In California alone, she noted, 41,500 cell phones are thrown away per day.

This problem extends to other electronic gadgets which can contain toxic substances like lead and mercury, Sanborn said.

Because California contains 10 percent of U.S. consumers, the state has the potential to change the ways of manufacturers throughout the country if AB 23 becomes law, Sanborn said.

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