

VI. SOCIAL ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL REALITIES OF IMPLEMENTATION

CHAPTER A -

A SELECTIVE SURVEY OF PUBLIC AWARENESS OF SOLID WASTE

MANAGEMENT IN THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA

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The Environmental Management Plan (EMP) proposed by the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) contains a section dealing with solid waste management recommendations. Policy 8 of these recommendations states that "Public education programs are essential to promote awareness of need for waste reduction." A sampling of the awareness, attitudes, and opinions of the people in the Bay Area in relation to ABAG, the EMP and solid waste management is a necessary first step in designing any such program.

Personal communications from Sue Stack of the California State Solid Waste Management Board, Robert Spitzka, Director of the Bay Area Solid Waste Management Program, and Peter Tiu of the Association of Bay Area Governments, show that no known attitude or opinion survey dealing with these aspects of solid waste management has been conducted for the San Francisco Bay Area.

It has been conjectured that perhaps as few as 1% of the people in the Bay Area knows of ABAG and/or the EMP, let alone problems associated with solid waste management. The present survey was conducted in an attempt to determine public awareness of these problems.

Materials and Methods

The survey was conducted by telephone. Limitations of time and funds restricted the survey to one hundred respondents. Names of potential respondents were selected from the 1978 Oakland telephone directory. Upon opening the book to an unknown page, a name and number were taken from the exact center of the left hand page. If the number so chosen yielded no response or if it was that of a business, then the succeeding listings were called until a residential respondent was reached. One hundred and eighty calls were required to obtain a sample containing one hundred individual respondents.

Phone calls were made during the midday hours of 10:30 a.m. to 12:00 noon, and 1:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The interviewer addressed each respondent by last name and introduced himself by name, mentioning that he was associated with the Department of Environmental Studies at the University of California, Berkeley. The interviewer explained the means of obtaining the respondent's name and phone number, and informed the respondent that all information obtained would be confidential. Eight questions were asked of each respondent. Questions were asked each time in the same order, and no changes in wording were made. The questions asked were as follows:

- 1) Have you ever heard of the Association of Bay Area Governments, or ABAG?
- 2) Have you ever heard of the Environmental Management Plan, or the EMP, proposed by ABAG?
- 3) Can you tell me what the EMP deals with?
- 4) Where do you believe your household trash is taken, or what do you think is done with it?
- 5) What do you believe could be done with landfill or dump sites after they have been completely filled and exhausted?
- 6) Are you aware that most of the landfill sites in the Bay Area will be completely filled in less than 10 years?
- 7) Are you presently reducing your trash?
- 8) If given adequate information and instruction, would you separate your recyclables (glass, metal cans, and papers) at home?

The interview was concluded by asking the respondent if he or she had any questions for the interviewer. These were answered. He or she was then thanked for cooperating. Responses were tabulated for each zip code zone and for the area as a whole (See Table 1).

Results and Discussion

The following figures are expressed as percentages. Percentage figures are the same as numbers of responses for the study as a whole unless otherwise indicated. 18% of the one hundred questioned responded that they had heard of ABAG. 39% of the total sample had heard of the Environmental Management Plan. When asked what they thought the EMP dealt with, the 39 responded as follows:

| EMP CONTENT | NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS | PERCENT OF THE 39 WHO KNOW ABOUT THE EMP | PERCENT OF (100) TOTAL SAMPLE |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Environment alone | 7 | 18% | 7% |
| Pollution alone | 3 | 8% | 3% |
| Zoning and pollution only | 4 | 10% | 4% |
| Zoning and building only | 4 | 10% | 4% |
| Zoning, building and environment | 15 | 39% | 15% |
| Do not know | 6 | 15% | 6% |
| | 39 | 100% | 39% |

In addition, seventeen of the thirty-nine who knew of the EMP were aware that the EMP was a document prepared by ABAG. Of the 18 respondents who knew of ABAG, only one had not also heard of the EMP.

When asked where or from whom they had obtained their information, all but one of those aware of ABAG or the EMP stated that their awareness was gained from television or newspapers.

An earlier survey done by National Analysis Incorporated titled Metropolitan American Housewives' Attitudes Toward Solid Waste Disposal (1972) revealed that one-third of 1281 interviewed homemakers were unaware of what becomes of their trash once it is removed from their premises.

| | ABAG | | EMP | | TRASH | | LANDFILL | | LOYRS | | REDUCE | SEX | | total |
|-------|------|----|-----|----|-------|------|----------|------|-------|----|--------|-----|----|-------|
| | yes | no | yes | no | dump | D.N. | build | D.N. | yes | no | yes | M | F | |
| 94501 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| 94601 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| 94602 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| 94603 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 94605 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| 94607 | 0 | 5 | 1 | 4 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 5 |
| 94608 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 5 | 0 | 4 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 5 | 1 | 4 | 5 |
| 94609 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| 94610 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 4 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 4 |
| 94611 | 1 | 6 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 6 | 4 | 1 | 6 | 7 |
| 94612 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| 94618 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 4 |
| 94619 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 3 |
| 94621 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| 94702 | 0 | 5 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 5 |
| 94703 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| 94704 | 0 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 4 |
| 94705 | 2 | 8 | 4 | 6 | 10 | 0 | 7 | 3 | 1 | 9 | 7 | 6 | 4 | 10 |
| 94706 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| 94707 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| 94708 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 94710 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 94720 | 0 | 4 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 4 | 4 |
| 94577 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 4 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 3 | 4 |
| 94578 | 0 | 8 | 4 | 4 | 7 | 1 | 5 | 3 | 5 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 5 | 8 |
| 94579 | 1 | 5 | 1 | 5 | 6 | 0 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 5 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 6 |
| 94530 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 6 | 0 | 4 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 1 | 5 | 6 |
| TOTAL | 18 | 82 | 39 | 61 | 78 | 22 | 62 | 38 | 24 | 76 | 58 | 27 | 73 | 100 |

TABLE 1. NUMBER OF RESPONSES BY ZIP CODE ZONE

In the present Bay Area study, 22% of those interviewed responded that they did not know what was done with their trash after collection. When questioned as to what uses the exhausted dumps and landfills could have, 38% of the total sample had no idea, or thought that nothing could be done. The remaining 62% of the Bay Area sample stated that they thought the sites could be used for parks, or low-level buildings. When asked whether they were aware that in less than 10 years the majority of the Bay Area landfill sites would be completely filled, 24% responded that they had heard or been aware of the fact, the remaining three-quarters (76%) of those interviewed believed that landfill areas were generally inexhaustible.

58% of the respondents stated that they reduce (recycle) some portion of their trash. As to the extent of their trash reduction, the response varied. Some stated that they saved their newspapers only, while others responded that they recycled their glass, cans, and newspapers. No distinction was made as to the extent of trash reduction. Therefore the 58% response to trash reduction may be a somewhat inaccurate figure.

In National Analysis' study it was stated that "virtually all metropolitan housewives (90%) express willingness to separate their trash to facilitate recycling." In the Bay Area study, 98% responded favorably to the same question. Of those who stated that they would not participate, or were not willing to home separate for recycling purposes (2%), one responded that he would prefer not to participate so that he could collect the money from recycling for himself. The other stated that he felt recycling was not worth his while and was too much trouble.

A pilot program titled "Home Separation of Recyclables in Berkeley" conducted by the League of Women Voters of Berkeley found that in its effort to inform residents about a home separation program, and to elicit cooperation in a home separation recycling program, that responses varied widely from one neighborhood to another. It was noted that while printed materials were very successful in several parts of Berkeley, personal communication was required in others to elicit a satisfactory degree of response. It was in this manner that the League found that people in different parts of the city have quite different concerns, responding to such programs more or less readily according to what they feel is important to themselves (David Tam, personal communication, 1978).

Berkeley is considered typical of the Bay Area as a whole in this respect.

In summary, the findings of this survey suggest that public awareness of ABAG, the Environmental Management Plan, and problems in solid waste management is far greater than was previously thought. This awareness appears to be the result of widespread coverage of the proceedings of the Association of Bay Area Governments and the Environmental Management Plan by communications media, primarily television and newspapers.

If ABAG's recommendations to have Federal and State governments fund educational programs for environmentally sound solid waste management aimed at primary and secondary schools, households,

stores, offices, and manufacturing plants are followed, a clear idea of the degree of public awareness and attitudes could play an important role in educational program design.

The results of the present study suggest a need for an area-wide survey before educational programs are designed. Additional surveys are recommended during the operation of any educational programs to monitor effectiveness.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. League of Women Voters of Berkeley, 1976, Home Separation of Recyclables in Berkeley: Berkeley, California, 19 pp.
2. National Analysis Incorporated, 1972, Metropolitan Housewives' Attitudes Toward Solid Waste Disposal. National Technical Information Service, Department of Commerce, Washington, D.C., 110 pp.