

Seattle Public Utilities

Please accept the uploaded file as SPU's comment letter on the proposed PaintCare program plan fee structure amendment.

April 30, 2025

Re: Fee structure amendment to the Washington Architectural Paint Stewardship Program Plan

Seattle Public Utilities is submitting this comment in support of PaintCare’s proposed amendment to the fees charged on architectural paint to support the paint stewardship program in Washington.

SPU supports the use of product stewardship programs to involve product producers in providing responsible end-of-life managements for their products, and to relieve local governments of the burden of costs and responsibilities for such programs. In our view, the PaintCare program in Washington has served as a good model for how a producer-run stewardship program can achieve the multiple objectives of producer responsibility laws. Since its inception, PaintCare has:

- Increased convenient access to responsible end-of-life management for leftover paint for residents in our city;
- Facilitated the recycling of latex paint that was previously being landfilled or improperly disposed;
- Relieved our hazardous waste management facilities of at least some costs associated with management of oil-based paint; and
- Increased awareness and participation of Seattle residents and businesses in responsible management of leftover paint.

In addition, the PaintCare staff have been proactive in communicating with SPU about relevant program activities, including the addition and removal of participating sites, and we appreciate their open communication and collaboration to improve leftover paint management services and outcomes in Seattle.

While the program has accomplished, or is on its way toward accomplishing, many of the law’s objectives, SPU believes there is a continued need for program investment and improvement in several critical areas:

- Securing participation from additional paint retailers and other locations in order to reach the target number of year-round sites in the Seattle-Tacoma region as required by the convenience criteria established in the law.
- Achieving higher collection volumes of leftover paint (collection volumes in PaintCare’s other state programs are generally higher than those achieved to-date in Washington) or demonstrating that lower collection volumes are due to improved “right-sizing” of paint purchases and reduced waste.
- Increasing awareness of the PaintCare program and its offerings among Washington consumers. (According to its most recent public awareness survey, 62% of paint consumers were aware of available drop-off opportunities in the state and 42% were aware that that paint can be recycled.)

SPU understands that paint sales have been lower than anticipated by PaintCare in its initial program plan and that operation costs associated with program implementation have been higher than planned and are expected to continue rising faster than initially projected, and we support PaintCare’s request to adjust the fees charged on paint sales that fund the program. Financial solvency is critical for the program to be able to continue providing the services that benefit Seattle residents and businesses.

In addition, we support PaintCare's plan to increase the communications budget to \$850,000 to provide funding for additional public education and outreach. We believe this additional investment is critical for increasing program awareness and participation and request that Ecology require that PaintCare maintains or exceeds this level of funding for education and outreach on an ongoing basis under this new fee level.

We also appreciate that PaintCare states that the budget includes funds to add new paint drop-off sites to improve convenience and we hope to see the program achieve its required number of sites in the Seattle-Tacoma area as a result of this additional funding. We request that Ecology require that PaintCare demonstrate that it is exercising all available options for securing the required additional participating year-round sites or, if it continues to fall short of required number, that it is providing supplemental services, such as additional collection events, to provide the intent for more convenient access in the Seattle-Tacoma area under this new fee level.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "McKenna Morrigan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name and last name clearly distinguishable.

McKenna Morrigan
Strategic Advisor – Waste Prevention and Product Stewardship
Solid Waste Planning & Program Management Division
Seattle Public Utilities