

April 5, 2010

## Starbucks Shareholders Vote Down 'Aggressive' Recycling Initiative

A Starbucks shareholder request to increase recycling was voted down at the company's annual meeting of shareholders, although 11 percent of shareholders voted in favor, which activists said should get the attention of the coffee house chain, reports Seattle Times.

A Starbucks shareholder request to increase recycling was voted down at the company's annual meeting of shareholders, although 11 percent of shareholders voted in favor, which activists said should get the attention of the coffee house chain, reports Seattle Times.

The proposal requested that Starbucks consider a more aggressive recycling strategy and goals for materials consumed in the stores and when they leave their doors, reports Triple Pundit. Starbucks, similar to the bottled water industry, is a target for criticism partly due to its direct contribution to landfills, which is about 3 billion coffee cups per year, according to the Web site.

It's also reported that Starbucks does not supply recycling bins in their store locations except in San Francisco, and has no plans to use recycled plastic in the bottles of its Ethos Water brand. However, several big brands of bottled-water have reduced the amount of plastic in their bottles in response to public criticism that bottled water is wasteful.

Conrad MacKerron at the As You Sow Foundation, who helped write the recycling initiative, told the Seattle Times that he was "happily surprised" at the 11 percent vote and that similar proposals presented to Coca-Cola and PepsiCo resulted in major recycling initiatives at both companies.

Starbucks recommended that shareholders vote down the measure because it already had a recycling program in place. Starbucks stated that the cups contain 10 percent post-consumer recycled fiber and some are recyclable and compostable in some parts of the country. The coffee chain previously reported that 70 percent of its stores recycled at least one type of waste where commercial recycling is available.

In addition, Starbucks announced in March that it's sponsoring the Betacup design competition to look for a solution to unrecyclable paper coffee cups. The company is sponsoring the competition as part of its target goal to supply 100 percent of its coffee in reusable or recyclable cups by 2015.

Starbucks said in an e-mail to Seattle Times that it will "continue to work with a variety of stakeholders on this issue and are open to any suggestions from As You Sow or others."

Triple Pundit suggests that Starbucks is missing the boat on this initiative particularly since environmental groups such as Climate Counts, Greenpeace and As You Sow help sell products when they are listed high in their environmental rankings.