

FORCE On-Farm Composting Pilot Project Kicks-Off

FORCE is proud to announce that the on-farm composting pilot project officially kicked-off in June 2010! The pilot project is focusing on composting pre-consumer vegetative food waste with animal bedding at an organic farm located in Tampa, Florida. The finished compost will be used by the farm to improve soil fertility for growing a variety of vegetable crops.

The purpose of this pilot project is to demonstrate proper design and operations; evaluate operations, economics, environmental parameters, and compost quality; and share project results with the Florida composting community.

Tampa General Hospital, Florida's second largest hospital, is providing the pre-consumer vegetative food waste and transportation to the composting site. Sweetwater Organic Farm is hosting the pilot and conducting all composting operations. The City of Tampa also loaned 64-gallon wheel carts for food waste collection for the duration of the pilot project. Kessler Consulting, Inc. is managing the project and providing organics technical assistance to both partners.

Sweetwater Organic Farm has been successfully composting Lowry Park Zoo's animal bedding for

several years. Farm Manager, Roberto Saenz said, "we are eager to expand our composting efforts and looking forward to an ongoing partnership with Tampa General Hospital."

Tampa General Hospital is also working with this farm to supply certified organic produce to the hospital food services. Paul Harvey, Director of Hospitality and Sustainability Coordinator for Tampa General Hospital, said that, "this partnership would provide a true closed loop system."

Both Sweetwater Organic Farm and Tampa General Hospital are interested in continuing their partnership beyond the pilot project and creating an ongoing organics recycling program.

The second pilot project focusing on composting at a registered yard waste processing facility is also getting underway. Polk County (located in Central Florida) is hosting the pilot project and Publix supermarkets will provide the pre-consumer vegetative food waste from three nearby stores.

More details on both pilot projects will continue to be made available in the next issues of *ForceMatters*.



Project kick-off with Tampa General Hospital and Sweetwater Organic Farm staff



Compost pilot windrows—on-farm compost pilot

Florida Yard Waste Disposal Ban (HB 569) Vetoed

On June 3, 2010 Florida Governor Charlie Crist vetoed HB 569, which would have lifted Florida's 20 year ban on landfilling yard waste. The legislation aimed at diverting organic waste to landfills for eventual methane capture.

In his veto letter, Crist stated: "Although the bill requires landfills to capture and make beneficial use of methane gas to qualify to accept yard trash, it directs materials to landfills that would otherwise be recycled."

Crist continued, "Florida is a leader in recycling. I am concerned that this bill will be a step backwards in our efforts. Additionally, maintaining a ban on yard trash disposal in Class I Landfill means it will extend the life of these costly and difficult to site facilities. I have not been presented with compelling reasons to abandon this long-standing policy that provides an opportunity to reach our recycling goals."

Opponents of the bill included the U.S. Composting Council (USCC), Recycle Florida Today, Sierra Club Florida, Southern Alliance for Clean Energy, Green Florida, Florida local governments, and yard waste processors.

According to the USCC, yard waste bans are currently in place in 23 states, several of which have been challenged in recent years. Fortunately, none of the 23 bans have been repealed to date.

Measuring Finished Compost

In a recent article in *BioCycle* (April 2010), the topic of how to measure and define mature compost was discussed. As with several other states, Florida uses Reduction in Organic Matter (ROM) to determine compost completeness. Florida's current rule (Chapter 62-709) uses the 60 percent ROM mark as a sign of matured compost.

The article claims that simply comparing start and end organic content leads to significantly underestimating the real loss of organic matter. The author suggests that the most effective way to calculate mature compost is to apply an analytical approach combining the expected ROM with a target C:N, and then adding CO₂ respiration as a more foolproof gauge of compost completion.

Source: *BioCycle* April 2010: "Characterizing Compost Completeness"

Florida 62-640 Biosolids Management Rule Update

In the past year, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) proposed biosolids management rules that would have required all biosolids compost to be registered as a fertilizer and to pay a per ton tax. Not only would such a tax place compost at a serious economic disadvantage in the horticultural industries, more importantly the purpose of the fertilizer tax is to address pollution problems caused by soluble nutrients in fertilizers...the very problem that compost can mitigate.

Over the past several months, Darren Midlane, Technical Director for Harvest Quest International, has worked in the interests of the entire biosolids compost community to argue for compost exemption from the fertilizer tax.

The FDEP accepted, and the ERC approved amendment language drafted by Mr. Midlane that exempts biosolids compost from the fertilizer tax in the revised 62-640 Biosolids rules if the compost conforms to the U.S. Composting Council STA (Seal of Testing Assurance) protocol.

This is a victory for both biosolids composters and compost producers/distributors throughout Florida.

Organics Recycling Key to High Recovery Rates

Resource Recycling (April 2010) recently published an article which identified 121 residential food waste collection programs throughout North America, with 66 in the U.S (most from California and Washington States) and 55 in Canada. The EPA estimates that a total of 63 percent of organics are disposed in landfills in the U.S (EPA MSW Characterization Study, 2007).

The article states that combined recycling and composting programs can divert approximately two-thirds or more of household garbage. Reduction in garbage can also reduce garbage collection frequency. Collecting organics is the key to boosting diversion over 50 percent. As food separation programs become more prevalent, it will become increasingly important for local communities to secure enough yard waste to mix with food waste.

Source: *Resource Recycling* April 2010: "Beyond Recycling"

Sarasota County, Florida Gauges Public Support for Banning Yard Waste Plastic Bags

In a recent direct mail survey to residents of unincorporated Sarasota County (County), an overwhelming 92 percent of respondents said "yes," they would be willing to switch from plastic bags to reusable containers for their yard waste. However, County decision-makers wanted more in-depth and candid customer input before considering banning the bagging of yard waste. Therefore, Kessler Consulting assisted the County with conducting three focus groups in various parts of the County to obtain qualitative feedback that would supplement the quantitative results of the survey.

Currently, the County's processing contractor manually debags yard waste employing four to six laborers. In 2007, an estimated 883 tons of plastic bags were removed from incoming yard waste and disposed of at the County landfill. If the County takes action to remove plastic from the yard waste stream, it could save \$2.00 per ton on the processing costs, as well as the expense of disposal.

Overall, the focus groups revealed that a majority of residents strongly support the option of a plastic bag ban for collecting yard waste curbside. In fact, 83 percent (24 out of 29) indicated they would support a ban.

Participants identified and discussed some of the key issues or barriers to a countywide ban on plastic bags for yard waste collection, including the following:

- Education of residents – A more aggressive effort is needed to educate residents about the impact of plastic bags.
- Convenience; sufficient storage space – A large number of containers might be needed, especially during certain times of the year. Allowing the use of biodegradable paper (Kraft) bags would help address this.
- Cost to purchase reusable cans/containers – Reusable cans or Kraft bags are more costly than plastic bags.

- Financial incentive – Some type of financial incentive, such as a tax incentive, rebate, or provision of collection containers, might serve as an incentive to encourage a change in behavior or compliance with a ban.
- Enforcement – Collection and disposal procedures need to be enforced to be effective.

Based on these focus groups, residents appear to be environmentally aware and receptive to changing behavior if informed about the reasons for such change. Armed with this additional information, Sarasota County will soon be deciding whether or not to join the ranks of other Florida counties, including Charlotte, Brevard, Collier, Alachua, and Polk (October 2010), that ban the use of plastic bags for yard waste collection.

Sarasota County residents may also pick up compost and mulch from six different locations at no cost. For more information on Sarasota County's yard waste program, please visit their website: www.scgov.net



TIPS

- Using plastic bags is discouraged. Use reusable containers instead.
- Remove all fruit from tree branches and dispose of fruit in the garbage.
- Residents are encouraged to compost and use mulching mowers.
- Lumber is not yard waste, place lumber by the garbage for collection.

FORCE Website Updated: Technology Database

The searchable Technology Database on the FORCE website has been recently updated!

This Technology Database provides a list of companies in the Composting and Organics Industry. Each company in this database is separated into one of four categories: Processing Systems; Preparation and Finishing Equipment; Additives; or Miscellaneous. Currently, this database lists over 200 companies, most of which are located in the U.S.

You are able to search the entire list by different criteria, such as Company Name, City, State, Category, Country and/or Keyword.

If you would like to be added to the Technology Database, please contact the FORCE staff directly or provide your information via the FORCE website by going to the Contact Us page, and indicate, in the comments section, you would like to be added to the Technology Database.

Please visit the FORCE website at:
www.floridaforce.org

FDEP Yard Trash Processing Facility Online Portal

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) is now accepting electronic submission of registration applications and annual reports. This option is available only for registration renewals and submittals of the annual report for those facilities that process only yard trash.

Registration application for facilities composting vegetative wastes, animal byproducts or manure or blending manure or for new yard trash processing facilities must be submitted to the FDEP on paper at present. To access the portal for electronic submission, please go to:
<http://portal.dep.state.fl.us>.

For more information regarding the portal, please contact Francine Joyal with the FDEP at:
Francine.Joyal@dep.state.fl.us or (850) 245-8747

Upcoming Events

SWANA WASTECON 2010

August 15-17, 2010
Boston Convention and Exhibition Center
Boston, Massachusetts
www.wastecon.org

7th Annual Rotary In-Vessel Users Group

September 16-17, 2010
Inn at Christmas Place
Pigeon Forge, Tennessee
For more information call: 1-888-465-9644

The Landscape Show

September 23-25, 2010
Orange County Convention Center
Orlando, Florida
www.thelandscapeshow.org

BioCycle Renewable Energy Conference

October 18-20, 2010
Marriot Downtown
Des Moines, Iowa
www.jgpress.com/biocyCleenergy

Resource Recycling Conference 2010

October 26-27, 2010
Marriott Rivercenter
San Antonio, Texas
www.rrconference.com

USGBC GreenBuild 2010

November 17-19, 2010
McCormick Place West
Chicago, Illinois
www.greenbuildexpo.org

U.S. Composting Council 2011 Annual Conference

January 23-26, 2011
Hyatt Regency
Santa Clara, California
www.compostingcouncil.org/conference

BioCycle Global 2011 International Conference

April 11-14, 2011
Town & Country Resort
San Diego, California
www.biocyCleglobal.com

For more information on FORCE or organics recycling in Florida, please call/visit/email:

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