

**Minutes of the Waste Prevention Steering Committee
Organics Subcommittee
October 3, 2007**

Attendees:

Chair: Donna Barlow-Casey, CVSWMD

Members: Will Cogan NECI; Tom Abbiati, VT Food Bank; Tracey Tsugawa, VOCAL; Andrea Asch, Ben & Jerry's; Rowen Hurley, Hunger Mountain Coop; Vicky Tebbetts, Vermont Hospitality Council; Tom Gilbert, Highfields Institute.

DEC Staff Support: Carolyn Grodinsky; Dave DiDomenico

Background/Introduction

Reviewed the brainstorming and prioritizing exercises completed at the previous (August 29) subcommittee meeting.

Updates since last meeting

The issues with the Intervale Composting Facility were discussed. Members of the subcommittee mentioned that inconsistent regulations for composting facilities were a major issue; permitting of composting facilities is not clear cut. There are jurisdictional issues between ANR, Agriculture and ACT 250 and these all need to be worked out. In addition, a composting facility shouldn't be regulated in the same way as a landfill. Donna mentioned that this is a national issue as well. A stakeholder group is being formed by the Composting Association of Vermont (CAV) to look into improving these permitting matters, but funding may be needed to convene the process

The group felt that fixing the regulatory and permitting issues of compost facilities was a top priority in order to move forward with organics diversion.

The group decided to write a letter to ANR Secretary Crombie and Agriculture Secretary Rodger Albee stating the urgency of fixing the problems immediately with the composting regulations.

Other Updates of interest to the group

See appendix below

Review and Discussion of August 29 Meeting Minutes

Discussion of comment given to Jeff Edelstein regarding the use of the word "mandate" in the minutes. The commenter felt that mandate was too strong.

There were no other comments on the minutes.

Goals for the Subcommittee

The group decided to first decide on an overarching goal or guiding principles. The following suggestions were made for a statement:

1. State should develop regulatory requirements and organic goals that:
 - Evaluate, protect and stimulate local economic opportunities;
 - Enable large and small scale composting;
 - Result in sustainable systems for diversion;
 - Reuse materials that help maintain the food security of the state; and,
 - Protect the environment.
2. State should set a goal of:
 - 100% diversion in 15 years
 - 70% in 10 years.

If after 10 years, the goal is not being met, the state will mandate organics diversion. This goal requires a composting infrastructure throughout the state.

3. The State should add to measurables of success to include the number of facilities that handle organic materials across the state, convenience of facilities to customers and to accurately determine the volume of material being handled.
4. Stimulate the economy and ensure a secure and clean environment by creating a realistic, incentive based regulatory framework that maximizes the ability for individuals and businesses to:
 - Create a system where, within 10 years, is less expensive to dispose of waste for receivers, producers and consumers; and,
 - The cost is based on attaining a 70% reduction in 15 years.
5. Public Education Goal:
 - Increase understanding among all types of generators about the many benefits of composting
 - Need to wrap education message into how organics reduction meets the goals for reducing greenhouse gas emissions (GGE).
 - Carolyn highlighted Northeast Recycling Council's Environmental Benefits calculator that can measure GGE benefits of composting http://www.nerc.org/documents/environmental_benefits_calculator.html
 - Include the negatives also

Note: Tom Gilbert noted the difference in diversion goals between the Governor's Commission on Climate Change and State Solid Waste Plan

We need to define organics diversion? Are we including residuals of food waste put in garbage disposals

Brainstorming/Priority List (from August 29th meeting)

1. Are there any new areas that need to be included in the list:

- Education
- Ban on organics from landfills
- Incentives for haulers to encourage development of collection routes – rebate for starting up diversion programs
- Mandate state institutions and any place that gets grant money that they have to divert
- True cost of life cycle accounting
- Multisector (carbon materials must be available for composting) list of materials statewide for compostable materials
- Statewide database for materials needed for composting. ie: list N sources and C sources available for composters to share and use. Can tie into other database that work with reuse or or recyclables

Next Steps:

Research: Carolyn to identify GIS databases that states have used identifying organics and recycling infrastructure that we might want use (CVSWD, EPA, NY, MA) . Donna, Tom Gilbert and others to identify others they may know of by Oct 23 Steering Committee meeting. This will help members visualize how to coordinate materials flow and where materials and facilities are located

Donna to provide CVSWD's Guiding Principles to help with goal setting

Donna, Dave, and Carolyn to prepare a draft map showing how all the brainstormed priorities are linked. The map will produce a "web" of how everything is connected and what ideas have to happen in order for others to happen.

All committee members to send Dave their recommendations on research needs – need this to make informed decisions on setting priorities.

Schedule for next steps:

By Oct 5, 2007, send draft meeting minutes to subcommittee;

By Oct 12, 2007, subcommittee members should send Dave any thoughts for data/research needed;

Oct 12, 2007, Dave, Carolyn and Donna will meet to connect/map ideas submitted during brainstorming session.

Oct 23, 2007, Steering Committee Meeting

Dave will send out "Meet-O-Matic" calendar (with minutes) for scheduling a meeting the second week in November.

Additional Discussions:

Good Samaritan law: people are not liable for donating food, if food is known to be good when it leaves their facility. However need to address food rescue as people are still reluctant to donate food.

Updates in the News:**Netherlands officials announce packaging tax**

Netherlands officials recently announced the government will be introducing a carbon-based packaging tax aimed at reducing carbon emissions related to the use of packaging, the first such levy in the European Union.

The tax will be based on estimated carbon dioxide emissions produced in making various packaging materials, and will be used to establish a general national waste reduction fund. Further, the Dutch government will adopt a new recycling target of 42 percent for plastic packaging by 2012, up from the current 22.5 percent as mandated by EU law.

The Brussels, Belgium-based European Organization for Packaging and the Environment (Euopen) is coming out against the levy, warning that the tax could complicate waste and recycling targets. European officials claim the previous experience "shows that it is impossible to compare fairly all of the environmental factors of each packaging material, let alone the packaging produced from those materials."

The new tax is to be implemented in January 2008.

Trash Challenge from NPR's Market Place (could be part of an education plan??)

<http://www.publicradio.org/columns/marketplace/trash/>