

Compost Study Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
October 28, 2008

Attendees:

Amy Shollenberger, Director, Rural Vermont  
Phil Benedict, Director, Agriculture Resource Management and Environmental Stewardship Division, Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets  
Brian Jerose, Partner, WASTE NOT Resource Solutions, Treasurer, Composting Association of Vermont (CAV)  
Teri Kuczynski, District Manager, Addison County Solid Waste Management District  
Pat O'Neill, Program Director, Composting Association of Vermont  
Melanie Kehne, Attorney, Land Use Panel (Act 250)  
Cathy Jamieson, Manager, Solid Waste Program, VT Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC)  
Jim Leland, Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets

Missing:

Karen Horn, Vermont League of Cities and Towns  
Scott Dillon, Survey Archeologist, Vermont Department of Historic Preservation

Observers/Staff:

Vicky Viens, Compost Specialist, Waste Reduction Section, DEC  
Dave DiDomenico, Environmental Engineer, DEC  
Dave Rogers, Rural Vermont  
Victoria Kovalenko, Vermont Law School  
Evan Belser, Vermont Law School

Facilitator:

Catherine Gjessing, Director of Policy, Research, and Planning, Agency of Natural Resources (ANR)

**Minutes**

The minutes for the October 3, 2008 meeting were approved with minor changes.

**Land Use Panel Meeting**

(Pre Meeting)

The Compost Study Committee will be meeting with the Act 250 Land Use Panel (LUP) at 9:30. The LUP has been briefed at their annual meeting regarding our discussions involving potential Act 250 rule changes. They have already discussed the concept of principally used.

Topics to mention to the LUP include traffic issues and permit by notice. However standards are developed, whether by the panel or by someone else, the standards would

need to be certified by LCAR. Some changes would need a statutory change, some just a rule change. Note that all permits can be appealed.

(Conversation with the LUP)

Melanie presented the straw proposal to the panel and briefly discussed each of the five conceptual tiers. The first and fifth tier, home composting and large scale sites are generally agreed to as being “exempt” from regulations and needing full review respectively. It is the middle group that requires more thought. Melanie also mentioned the concept of principally used that the Panel had agreed is a useful concept. Lastly she mentioned the idea of permit by notice that the Panel is authorized to use but has not used historically.

With regard to the municipal/community based tier, the Panel mentioned that ownership was not a concern and that the tiers should be based on size. There was also a question of why a permit by notice was needed and why a minor permit was not adequate. There was also a question on the travel distance that is mentioned in the community based tier.

The Panel’s objection to the permit by notice is that neighbors should have the opportunity to be heard when a project is being proposed rather than once the operations have begun and there is a problem.

The statute concerning development on farms, and the Stonybrook decision was discussed and how this would work for certain composting sites on farms.

The following scenario was discussed: if a composting operation of a certain size was located on a leased portion of a farm larger than 10 acres, it would require an Act 250 permit. If the farmer sold that same (formerly leased) portion from the larger parcel of land and a composting operation was established, no Act 250 permit would be required. A member of the H.873 study group commented that the requirement for a permit should be consistent whether the farmer owns the land or not. The Panel referred to this as the “Lease Law” and noted that it is well-established in Act 250 precedent. Leases are temporary and not recorded in the land records. Small projects can have significant environmental impacts, but the Legislature drew the one-acre/ten-acre line for Act 250 jurisdiction.

The Chair of the Land Use Panel and other panel members expressed interest in meeting again to continue the conversation.

### **Public Awareness**

Two handouts were provided, one from ANR and one from CAV. They are available on the website.

We first need to make recommendations for increasing public awareness of the benefits of composting. One national campaign is the Compostable Organics Out of Landfills by

2012, or the Cool 2012 campaign. There are some useful materials on the website: <http://www.cool2012.com/>.

There are potential stakeholders, such as energy coops and landfills, that are promoting putting organics in landfills to make gas. This has been hailed as step forward in landfill management. However, putting same amount of biodegradable material into a digester for example has a greater energy yield and produces compostable material as an output. The digestate can be put back into the soil.

Landfill gas is renewable energy from their perspective. We need to include the digester technology in the education piece.

One benefit is the reduction of green house gas emissions. We should get education out on this. Adding organic matter to soil helps to sequester carbon.

Solid waste district's have a local infrastructure to deal with some of these issues. District's will provide comments by Thursday. AVR been doing compost education in schools. Towns may send information out in annual reports.

Dairy farms, all coops send something to farms a couple of times a month.

The handouts seem to cover the development side and the implementation side. Once we have the campaign, distribute it through the list. Provide a small amount of money. Can look at the tobacco task force as a model. Communities could get \$500 dollars. District sees this as a good adjunct. Focus more on why and how much fun it is. Work hard on campaign side of it and have it professionally done. Could use marketing students.

Where are the existing resources to fund this and how much money would it cost? Solid Waste districts may be able to fund through user fees.

For schools, many districts use AVR. With general community, there is not as much going on. The group thought that there are a lot of agencies dealing with composting already and we should tap into what exists. Community Garden Association of Vermont, UVM Extension Service, Peak Oil (using composting to reduce import of fertilizer) are some examples of groups to tap into.

This is a great opportunity for state government to lead by example. Sponsor a competition between agencies; create a governors organic challenge or restart the Clean State Council. The Solid Waste Program has started a local campaign in the Waterbury complex. Once this gets going, we plan to expand Agency wide and then to other parts of state government.

We need to push the education and message now; new technologies, like gasification, plasma arc and the demand for wood and creating wood pellets, might compete for the same waste. If we don't start getting out the message and be aggressive, those voices may be louder.

Can operators sell carbon credits for a composting facility? Can operators get carbon credits for anaerobic digestion? Some questions to investigate, potentially through the REGI system that went into effect a few months ago. Composting does not save the amount of greenhouse gases as much as life cycle of composting.

Question of whether we could leverage \$50-\$100,000 from SWMAF. MA Local Heroes was a buy local food effort and it was huge.

Suggestion of discussing the project with Champlain college. Might be able to leverage some real assets there if could leverage some money. With a few phone calls might be easy to come up with \$100,000. Call to Vermont Business of Social Responsibility.

ANR sponsors a materials exchange list. The company that runs that list also runs an organics/manure exchange list. That is one way to tap into businesses. The report needs to address big picture. Discuss the structure already in place, which is the solid waste districts. Maybe talk about enhancing activities. We should note that if the report gets too detailed, it might get into the Ways and Means jurisdiction and things die there. The report would discuss the campaign to get the word out and would mention and list other groups that the Agency would work with to meet the goals the legislature set forth.

Suggestions for report: discuss benefits of compost use; benefits of composting; composting versus landfilling; focus on the positive aspects and not the negative, and produce a one page sheet that explains the final recommendations, perhaps build on the flow chart possibly. Link to the Governor's Commission on Climate Change. List public awareness efforts that are currently happening.

In farm community, demonstrations work best, farmers like to see what other farmers are doing.

### **Composting Contact Person**

Envisioning whether contact person be in ANR. Some thought that solid district would be right place. People less fearful about reaching them, than the state. Most feel that the Solid Waste Program would be the central location for a go to person or an Ombudsman.

Suggest training the permit specialists around the state on specific permitting issues surrounding composting. Ombudsman may be responsible for more than just permit issues.

### **Other Information**

There was a question in an earlier meeting as to how many loads of carbon is needed to handle 100 Holsteins. 1 ½ units bedding I(straw, hay, woodchips, sawdust) 1 to 2:1 to one unit manure. 100 cows manure on daily basis was 9 cu yds. 120 – 100 lbs. Daily basis, ¾ full of typical dump truck load. 1 ½ times that a heaping dump truck. Reduced a in a bedded back. Volume shrinks. Woods shavings and straw can fit 400 in a cubic ton. Plain manure. Trailer 60-100 cu yd. 6 days in one trailer. More heavily bedded

then most farms would do. Most farms will only compost a portion. One trailer load \$1500 to \$2000. Dairy and other stock more liquid then calf.

**To Do:** Submit any feedback on the education section along with feedback on the revised strawman by November 7.