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Scaling up Composting in the Charlotte Region

Food Recovery Summit | Nov. 18th, 2015 | Charleston, South Carolina



GreenBlue is a non-profit dedicated to researching and promoting the principles of *sustainable materials management*





GreenBlue's Sustainable Packaging Coalition

- Membership group that brings together hundreds of companies & stakeholders
- Working *together* to broaden the understanding of packaging sustainability, develop meaningful improvements
- Currently over 150 members

Reports



Packaging design tools



Educational courses



Conferences



Consulting



Project goals

1. To promote food waste and compostable packaging recycling in the Charlotte area
2. To generate lessons learned and fundamental guidance to stimulate much broader and more extensive organics and packaging composting programs nationwide



Partners

- U.S. EPA Region 4 (grant funding)
- North Carolina Dept. of Environment & Natural Resources
- Mecklenburg County Solid Waste
- The Infrastructure, Design, Environment and Sustainability Center (IDEAS) at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte (UNCC)
- Elemental Impact (Ei) – Non-profit
- Earth Farms Organics – Composter



Goal 1 - Approach

Provide assistance for commercial generators to initiate or expand F&PW diversion programs.

1. Recruit: communicate, educate, convince
2. Provide funding for:
 - Start-up & logistical support
 - Training and education / technical assistance
 - 1-3 months of collection
3. Track metrics
 - Tonnage
 - Awareness and attitudes through surveys

Goal 1 - Accomplishments

- Team contacted over 90 F&PW generators
- Gained 13 participants + county schools:
 - **Diverted 353 tons** of material (through Sept. 2015)
 - Developed SMM / composting lesson plan
- Composter growth and viability:
 - Added a scale to their collection vehicle to be able to report back to their customers the quantity of organic waste over time
 - Increased collection by 9%

Participants



Goal 2 - Lessons learned & best practices

- Waste management practices matter
- Data matters
- Contamination matters
- Education matters





Waste management practices

Economics and contract specifics play a large role in the viability of F&PW recycling.

Waste management best practices

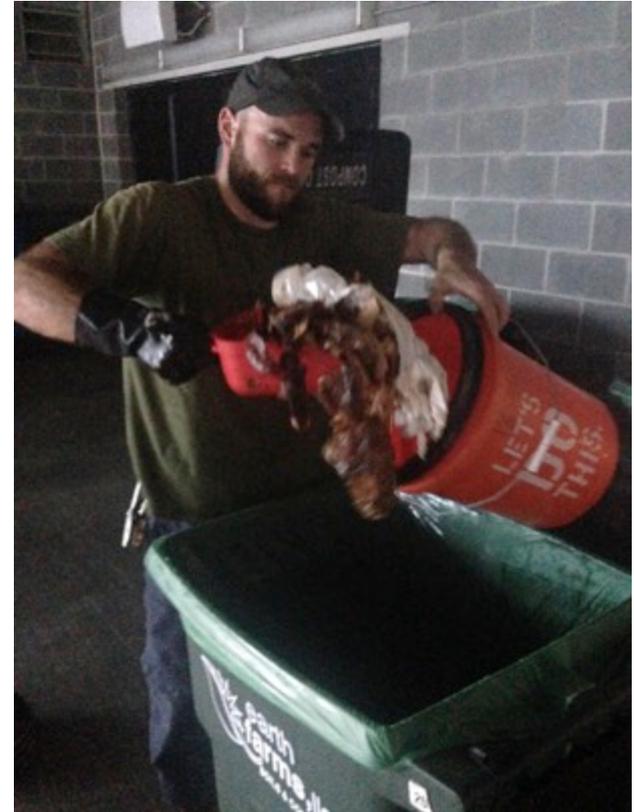
- Ensure a per ton cost vs. a “pull” cost.
- Ensure transparency regarding ownership and final disposition of waste in contracts.

Data matters: Waste characterization results

F&PW averaged 6 lbs/gal.

Contamination represented 0.3% (by weight) of F&PW.

Compostable non-food items including packaging (CNF) represented 5.1% (by weight) of F&PW.



Data matters: **Best practices**

1. Perform a waste audit as a guide to:

- Determine the quantity and type of waste generated
- Identify potential areas for waste reduction
- Identify opportunities for reuse, recycling, and composting materials
- Evaluate costs and potential savings for diversion
- Set goals to improve recycling and composting activities.

2. Require contractors / waste haulers to provide tonnage data on all waste streams.

Contamination matters

While 79% of respondents say *they* “correctly dispose of all waste,” the most common reason for contamination by respondents was **confusion** (14%).

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WE COMPOST

¡Produce el abono!
¡Nuestras Empresas Ahora Participan!

TODO LA COMIDA
Frutas, verduras, carne, pescado, mariscos, huesos, arroz, frijoles, fideos, pasteles y panes, queso, y cáscara de huevo

ALL FOOD
Fruits, vegetables, meat, poultry, seafood, shellfish, bones, rice, beans, pasta, bakery items, cheese and eggshells

PAPEL MANCHADO POR COMIDA
Cartón encerado, servilletas, toallas de papel, platos de papel*, bolsillos de té, posos/filtros para el café, cajas de madera y cajas grises de la pizza.
*Papel manchado por comida sin recubrimiento no tiene una superficie brillante.

FOOD-SOILED PAPER
Waxed cardboard, napkins, paper towels, uncoated* paper plates, tea bags, coffee grounds/filters, wooden crates and greasy pizza boxes
*Uncoated food-soiled paper does not have a shiny surface.

PLANTAS
Recortes de plantas, podos de árbol, hojas, pasto, maleza y mala hierba

PLANTAS
Floral trimmings, tree trimmings, leaves, grass, brush and weeds

NO!
• Líquidos, grease, cooking oil
• Plastic or styrofoam
• Glass
• Metal

¡NO!
• Líquidos, grasa, aceite de cocinar
• Plástico o Styrofoam
• Vidrio
• Metales

When in doubt, throw it out!

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Questions? Call 704-263-8186
Earth Farms, LLC ♦ www.earthfarms.com ♦ 361 Colt Road, Dallas, NC 28054

Contamination matters: Best practices



Education matters

- Recruitment was very difficult
- Companies want to be more sustainable



Education Matters: Best practices for why, how & what

- Communications to public
- Identify resources and supporters
- Connect with schools
- Use signage, handouts, and videos

Education Matters: Best practices why, how, and what



Compostable packaging

It is critical to include compostable packaging in the emerging organics recovery infrastructure

- 29% of participants said they use compostable packaging, **82%** that using compostable packaging is beneficial.
- Use of compostable utensils, cups, lids, and straws would have reduced number of contaminants by 27%.



Policies and incentives

- Not a primary focus of this project
- Extremely important for the development of needed infrastructure
- Recommendations for localities are detailed in **EPA's Managing and Transforming Waste Streams tool**



The screenshot displays a web-based interface for EPA's Managing and Transforming Waste Streams tool. It features a search bar and a table with the following columns: Name, Policy or Program, Action Program Description, National Public Good, Service Provided, Economic Impact, Local Authority, Recyclable, Staff Knowledge, and Community Self-Initiation. The table lists three waste management options:

Name	Policy or Program	Action Program Description	National Public Good	Service Provided	Economic Impact	Local Authority	Recyclable	Staff Knowledge	Community Self-Initiation
1	High-Density Land-Use	Waste management for existing 50% or more density from existing and additional capacity and through urban and rural as well as existing and expanding.	Community	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
2	Low-Density Land-Use	Waste management for existing 50% or more density from existing and additional capacity and through urban and rural as well as existing and expanding. Double existing for low density expansion in the low density location.	Community	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
3	Low-Density Area Plan	Waste management for existing 50% or more density from existing and additional capacity and through urban and rural as well as existing and expanding. Double existing for low density expansion in the low density location.	Community	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Next steps

- Develop a Road Map / Expand EPA Tool(s) to include Best Practices for All Sectors
- How2Compost Label

DRAFT



*Not in Backyard;
Composting
programs for
packaging may not
exist in your area

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Thank you!

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