

Dear Chairman Klein and members of the House Committee on Natural Resources and Energy:

The Composting Association of Vermont (CAV) submits the following for your consideration as you consider S.208. Our comments are in response to HNRE discussions last week and to add to what was presented and discussed at the Materials Management Summit.

Since Act 148 was passed CAV has focused most of its efforts on identifying assets and capacity within the food system to bring to the organics diversion task. These efforts are now formalized through the Food Cycle Coalition (FCC), a Farm to Plate Task Force.

The FCC has become the mechanism through which we are building relationships between food system advocates and practitioners and traditional solid waste. It includes statewide organizations such as VSJF, Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB), Vermont Association of Conservation Districts (VACD), Vermont Food Bank (VFB), Highfields Center for Composting (HCC), ANR Solid Waste Program, Vermont Solid Waste District Managers Association (VSWDMA), UVM Extension, and UVM Center for Sustainable Agriculture.

In the 1 1/2 years since the Coalition was formed we have already identified \$500,000 in resources from the food system to bring to the materials management tasks under Act 148. Most of these are in the form of commitments for technical assistance and match funds for infrastructure on farms interested in composting or adding laying flocks fed food scraps.

At this time we are in the final stages of a year-long Asset Mapping Project.

As part of that project we held a day long strategy session with representatives of the above organizations as well as representation from regional planning, economic development and food rescue. The top priority this group identified was the need for regional planning for organics management. (I believe Paul Tomasi of the NEKSWMD talked about the work his district is doing along these lines).

The second top priority was a messaging and marketing program that is flexible to meet the varied infrastructure that is needed since composting feed stocks and food rescue opportunities vary from region to region.

What has become clear is that the intent of Act 148 to manage organics as a resource is advancing collaboration opportunities between traditional solid waste and the food system. When the Asset Mapping final report is completed - by the end of summer - I will forward a copy.

Investment from the private sector will also add to funding infrastructure development. At least six established farms are considering taking food scraps in the 10 tons/Wk range for both compost and livestock feed. CAV is working with Intervale Foundation, VHCB Farm Viability Program, and Highfields Center for Composting to develop business models for raising laying hens on food scraps.

There also seems to be interest in niche organics hauling. These haulers can partner with traditional trash and recycling haulers to meet Act 148 mandates. Developing a business model for niche hauling is an emerging need.

At this point we have no idea how much more food we can rescue to feed people. Willing Hands, a regional non-profit in White River Junction area is collecting and distributing 3 /4 tons /week with one truck and 100 volunteers. This is a replicable model that is compatible with the regional management of organics.

I hope these examples of what is happening 'on the ground' right now will help inform the Committees discussion of S.208. Needs have been identified, and will continue to be identified within the Food Cycle Coalition's stakeholder led processes, and with funding can move forward.

As you may be aware ANR Stormwater Division is in the process of revising the Stormwater Management Manual (SMM). This version will include and require the use of Low Impact Development/Green Infrastructure practices. These practices - such as amending disturbed soils with compost - will provide a significant market demand for compost and compost based products.

I am available to meet with HNRE to answer questions on any of the above. CAV can also provide additional information on the Coalition's groundbreaking efforts to find capacity and enterprise opportunities within the food system to support the organics diversion goals in Act 148.

Sincerely,

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