2046 U.S. ROUTE 2
MORETOWN, VERMONT 05676
phone 802.882.8154
web WWW.GROWCOMPOST.COM

Testimony to the House Natural Resources and Energy – Feb. 19, 2015

I am grateful for the opportunity to speak to you today from my own experience and business perspective.

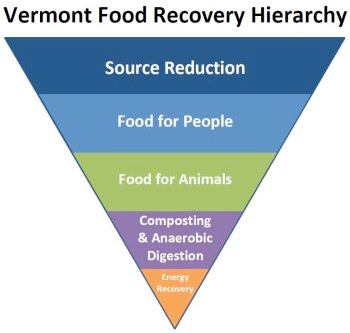
I am in general agreement with the consensus of the committee however I am a bit of a square peg in this industry.

I am a composter – my business was founded with a focus on the production of high quality horticultural compost. All of the products created on my farm are NOFA certified for Organic Production.

We collect organic material from the largest businesses, resorts, coffee roasters and breweries in Central Vermont. We are extremely careful with the material that we accept at our facility. There is a zero contamination expectation – no bio bags, no fruit stickers, no compostable serving ware – only food scraps, coffee residuals, brewing residuals.

We divert these organic materials to their highest and best use using the hierarchy adopted in the Universal Recycling Law:

- **We offer food rescue of quality food for human consumption** – our customers let us know if they have a crate of apples or a box of unopened bread. We work with food shelves and Capstone Community Kitchen Academy to divert this food for people to eat.
- **We feed farm animals** – Our farm currently feeds chickens and produces eggs we can then offer to our customers for delivery as we pick up their discarded food scraps.
- **We make high quality compost and soil blends** for growers of organic food throughout new England.
- **We work with the anaerobic digester at VTC to create energy** through a CEDF grant with the agency of ag and the public service Department



My business is about SOIL - the foundation of our agriculture, tourism and working lands in Vermont

We count on soil for our healthy local FOOD –

- Our booming local food movement
- The health of our children; (recent studies show that the Children in Vermont eat more fruit and veg. than anywhere else in the country

We count on our soil for water storage and purification -

- the quality of our lakes and streams – high carbon soils not only add depth to the soil profile they help to hold the inorganic portions of the soil in place and grow healthy root systems to prevent erosion.

Nutrient cycling –

- Compost biologically transforms our food scraps and manures into useable nutrients to feed our soils.

- Soil is ENERGY – it is energy for the healthy local foods it produces and for the soil it feeds and even for the anaerobic digesters that create the energy we use in our homes and businesses.

The most recent studies shows the rate of soil formation as .058 millimeters per year – in other words it takes about 437 years for each inch of soil.

The same study shows that the rate of erosion in the US as between .2 and 1.65 mm per year – losing that same inch of soil at a rate of 15 to 142 years per inch.

The application of high quality compost to our land accelerates the formation of soil
Our current accounting system doesn't put much value on the soil. The cost of our soil needs to be considered in our policies

THE UNIVERSAL RECYCLING LAW is a step in the right direction

Recent Studies have shown that managing our residuals is the best and fastest tool for soil formation.

Managing our residuals is the best and fastest tool for soil formation.

We have a structure in the Universal Recycling Law for doing this– for funneling these important resources back to our people, our animals and our land,

However, Our residuals accounting system is still based solely on comparative costs of collection for landfill versus collection for composting. We are thinking of the cost per truckload rather than the cost of losing our soils.

Unfortunately, the cost of bringing waste to a compost facility, composting it and then applying it to farmland can be a significant barrier to municipalities and farmers alike.

The Opportunity in Vermont :

The Universal Recycling Law allows us to get the ratepayer in the same room with the farmer. The Universal Recycling Act actually helps us to consider the interrelationships between the urban and agricultural sectors and their associated costs and benefits. It allows the farmer to talk to the solid waste manager and the anaerobic digester, the hauler and the ratepayer. This looks a lot closer to our ecosystem than any other organics recovery system we have seen so far.

My ask:

Although I am in agreement with my colleagues on this Advisory Committee, I ask that you look further and think bigger.

Incentivize Best Practices
Building soil for organic production is a value to this state
Collecting 'clean' organics is essential for our soils
Create a 'Right to Compost' for those creating soils for organic production
(ie. The nuisance odor rules are unrealistic – when hauling organic material, even animal manures off local farms- our facility is 'prohibited' from off-site odors. This is a difficult if not impossible burden to meet when building compost windrows or feeding animals)

Tax Bad Practices

Residuals collected for soil building are not solid waste.
Change the regulatory jurisdiction of the Solid Waste division. This program has a tremendous workload with the Universal Recycling Law. Leave organic producers out of their jurisdiction.

This law offers the potential of integrating the costs of soil loss into the state and municipal spreedsheets
This is a win for Vermont:

- Building soil
- Cleaning up our lakes and streams
- Keeping hazardous chemicals out of our food system
- Reclaiming the nutrients that are available for us to use by feeding people quality leftovers, feeding animals, building soil, making energy.
- Improving our air quality by decreasing the greenhouse gas caused by these materials being landfilled.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Ransom