

Submitted by -Brian Jerose, Fairfield

Hello Senators Branagan and Degree,

As a resident of Fairfield in Franklin County, I am writing to inform you of an effort to delay implementation of Act 148. As a member of the Composting Association of Vermont, I have learned of some information provided to the Senate encouraging Act 148 amendments. I understand you are not seated on the committees considering amendments so I have copied Senators Rodgers and Bray.

Some of the claims justifying the amendments are factually inaccurate and concern me greatly. I will try to quickly address some of these points.

Proponents of the amendments claim the below:

Amendment #1:

Do not require haulers to offer expensive and carbon intensive curbside organics collection for households by July 1, 2017 (next phase of the Universal Recycling Law).

The economics and feasibility of organics management are driven by transportation costs; mandatory collection drives up overall costs and imposes undue burden on customers. The carbon impact of collecting food waste can far exceed the carbon benefit of diverting food waste as emissions from vehicle fuel consumption would exceed avoided landfill emissions. Separate trucks are required to collect food waste and additional travel miles will be required.

My response: The carbon impact does not exceed the avoided landfill emissions. Both VT specific and EPA studies document the major impact landfill methane emissions (most concentrated greenhouse gas emissions) reductions from removing food scraps and organic residuals from landfill disposal. The Highfields Center for Composting and other partners documented even with VT's rural development and relatively long trucking distances, that each 5-gallon pail of food scraps diverted from landfilling to composting results in a net carbon savings of a gallon of gasoline not consumed.

The economics are region specific and based on innovations in routes and equipment by hauling entities. Some communities have observed net cost savings since Act 148 implementation has begun, specifically the Windham County Solid Waste District.

The proponents of amendments further claim in their talking points:

Amendment #2:

Amend Act 148 threshold for the collection of Organics to maintain the current level of 26 tons per year.

Vermont's organics requirements are already substantially more aggressive than any other state in the region (i.e. State of Mass. bans commercial food waste generated at 1 ton/wk vs. current ½ ton a week for Vermont)

The economics of organics management are most challenging for small businesses; imposing mandatory collection at these levels will increase cost to a small business (generating 18 tons/year) by as much as \$2340 year.

In 2013, there were 16 certified organic facilities in place. As of today, there are 11 certified organics facilities with a total permitted capacity of approximately 29,172 tons per year; some facilities are not operating at full capacity.

Vermont's certified organic facilities as well as farmers, rely upon the cleanliness of incoming food waste, particularly if it being used as animal feed; as small businesses and households are required to divert food waste on a non-voluntary basis, their food waste is more likely to be contaminated.

Landfills with gas collection systems are a viable option for organics processing. Washington Electric Coop provides renewable energy to 7,000 homes from the gas generated from the landfill in Coventry.

My response:

I will focus on two of the above points – agreeing that as more food scraps are diverted from landfill disposal, there is a risk of more contamination for composting and animal feeding operations. However the solution isn't to say it shouldn't be done or slowed down, rather focused education of the generators. These strategies have proven successful for those operators and farmers who put in the effort, as well as in other communities with outreach and education programs.

The second point is the assertion that "landfills with gas collection are a viable option for organics processing." This is only true if we seek a fraction of the value of the recovered residuals and aren't minimizing the GHG pollution. Landfill gas recovery can be recognized as a big step forward from prior "do-nothing" approaches to methane losses. However the methane and energy that can be recovered from food scraps and residuals at a dedicated anaerobic digester (on-farm or commercial) can be 10x or more than landfill recovery. Methane and GHG gas losses to the atmosphere from landfills are still significant, even with landfill gas recovery since they are only 10-30% efficient. Further, the organic matter that can be used to replenish our state's soils via composting and/or AD systems with post-processing is completely lost and contaminated in a landfill setting.

I am willing to share more information and observations based on working with farms, compost sites and other solid waste management facilities in my professional career. Locally I have worked with the Hudak Farm and Greenhouses to expand their composting to include food scraps in collaboration with the Northwest Solid Waste District, and with Terry and Joanne Magnan to compost manure and bedding in an aeration and heat recovery process. Numerous businesses, individuals, solid waste districts and other entities have been working hard to implement Act 148. An unnecessary delay would harm their work and investments to build up the state's infrastructure for AD, composting, animal feeding and very importantly edible food recovery for food shelves.

Thanks for your consideration and attention to this issue.

-Brian Jerose

Fairfield

Mobile (802) 370-4774