



**NORTHEAST KINGDOM WASTE MANAGEMENT DISTRICT**

P.O. BOX 1075 LYNDONVILLE, VERMONT 05851  
(802)626-3532 OR (800)734-4602 FAX (802)626-3519  
[www.nekwmd.org](http://www.nekwmd.org)

April 24, 2017

Senate Committee on Natural Resources & Energy

**RE: Organics Collection & Processing**

Dear Committee Members:

The Northeast Kingdom Waste Management District (NEKWMD) is writing on behalf of our 49 member towns to urge the Legislature to allow Vermont's Universal Recycling Law – Act 148 to remain unchanged.

We understand there have been recent attempts to scale back portions of the law as they relate to the collection and processing of organic wastes. While we understand the difficulties faced by some in the hauling community, progress is clearly being made in this area. The NEKWMD has been diverting food scraps from landfill disposal since 2007. In that first year we diverted 154 tons of material. Food scrap diversion has increased every year since then, and in 2016 we diverted 452 tons of organic material. The NEKWMD is actively seeking additional composting and food scrap processing capacity. We are fully prepared to meet the July 1, 2017 deadline whereby solid waste facilities accepting trash must begin collecting food scraps. In fact, we already had 10 locations scattered throughout the District collecting food scraps for several years.

Some would have you believe organics make up a small fraction of the total waste stream, or that organics in the landfill are critical for generating power. Please don't be fooled by these attempts to misrepresent the issue. Regardless of the exact percentage, organic material suitable for composting accounts for the largest percentage of what's being landfilled today. Secondly, anaerobic decomposition of organic matter produces methane gas, which in turn is one of the most potent greenhouse gases. And while some of the methane is captured for power production, at least 20% of the methane generated in landfill settings is discharged directly to the atmosphere. The point is those who wish you to believe organics should be landfilled are willing to say anything to maintain the status quo. The reality is landfilling of organics can and should become a thing of the past. Organic material is far better off being returned to the soil where, as compost, it can aid in water retention, help prevent soil erosion, and make plants more disease and pest resistant.

For haulers struggling with compliance, several avenues allow flexibility in meeting the Act 148 requirements:

- (1) **Haulers have the ability to charge for this service.** Unlike the recycling mandate contained in Act 148, haulers can charge for this service. This allows the hauling community the ability to recover costs associated with providing the service. This also allows haulers to price themselves out of the service if they simply cannot afford the initial investment.
- (2) **There must be a facility within 20 miles willing and able to accept food scraps.** This allows many locations to avoid implementing the service until 2020.
- (3) **Haulers can work cooperatively with their solid waste districts to apply for an exemption.** The NEKWMD has applied for, and been granted pre-approval by the Agency of Natural Resources (ANR), an exemption for the curbside collection of residential organics. This exemption allows nearly 30 registered haulers to avoid picking up food scraps from their residential customers. While the requirement for commercial collection of food scraps is still in place, many of these commercial establishments are already being serviced by haulers who have made the investment in infrastructure.

The NEKWMD fully recognizes the challenges posed by Act 148; however, the legislation purposely included a tiered implementation schedule that allows for growth of these programs over time. Extending deadlines at this point simply delays the inevitable. Organic material does not belong in landfills anywhere. We hope you join us in continuing to support Act 148 by not delaying or changing any of the deadlines.

Most sincerely,



Paul A. Tomasi  
Executive Director