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2007 Compost Facility Survey Results Summarized

Joe Van Rossum

The Solid & Hazardous Waste Education Center (SHWEC) conducted a survey of all licensed compost facilities in Wisconsin during late summer and fall of 2007. This report provides a summary of some of the key findings of the survey. The complete list of licensed compost facilities can be found on the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources' Waste Materials facility list website at:

<http://dnr.wi.gov/org/aw/wm/faclists/>



The survey was mailed to the 168 licensed facilities in late summer of 2007. After a limited response, SHWEC staff followed up with phone calls to non-responding facilities in an attempt to garner more replies to the questionnaire. This effort resulted in a total of 109 facilities completing the survey. The questionnaire requested information relating to contact information, facility operation, compost product information, and educational needs.

Facility Operation

This section looked at facility size, materials utilized, sources of material, composting process used and compost pile monitoring. Facility size varies from less than one acre to over 40 acres. In some cases, licensed facilities serve only as drop-off sites with the actual composting taking place at another location. The volume of material handled also varies greatly with a range from 10 tons per year to 57,000 cubic yards.

Thirty facilities report they are monitoring compost piles for temperature, oxygen or moisture content alone or in combination. As would be expected, facilities are accepting the traditional feedstocks; grass, leaves, garden debris and brush. There are six facilities that report they accept food waste and/or food processing materials. Additionally, 12 composters report accepting materials in compostable plastic bags.

Compost Product Information

Composters in Wisconsin continue to, for the most part, place minimal value on their finished product as 86 report giving compost away -- in most cases to community residents. There are also 68 reports of utilizing their compost for municipal projects. Additionally there are a few composters who report spreading compost on agricultural land.

Twenty-one composters report selling compost in bulk with prices ranging from \$0.50 to \$24/cubic yard. Additionally three facilities report selling bagged compost. Twenty-four facilities are currently screening their compost products. However, the testing of compost products is still quite limited as fewer than ten facilities report performing any analysis on their final product.

Educational Needs

There appears to be a need for educational programs for composters. Over half of survey respondents indicated a need for more information related to composting. SHWEC will evaluate this situation to formulate an outreach program to address this need.

In the coming weeks SHWEC will finalize the survey report and post additional information in the Publications section of our website.

Single Stream MRF for Brown, Outagamie and Winnebago County

John Katers

The Outagamie County Board recently approved the construction of a new single stream Material Recycling Facility (MRF), which will be located at the current Outagamie Recycling facility and serve Brown, Outagamie and Winnebago Counties. Total project costs are expected to be \$7.95 million. As reported by the *Appleton Post Crescent*, the Outagamie County Board's approval clears the way for the cost of the new facility to be shared between Brown, Outagamie and Winnebago Counties, all of which currently participate in a tri-county agreement for garbage and recycling processing. The cost for each county will be based on the tonnage that each county typically drops off at the recycling plant.



The tri-county agreement between these counties has been very successful in keeping garbage pickup and recycling fees low by allowing the three counties to effectively share resources. Moving recycling from the current dual stream system, in which paper is collected separately, to a single stream collection is another way in which the tri-county agreement will serve to best meet the needs of the region.

In the single stream pickup, paper will be combined with plastic, glass and metal recyclables, and all recyclables will be picked up every week. Oshkosh Sanitation supervisor Bob Horton said he hopes the new program will reduce recycling complications for residents who often put the wrong recyclables out on the wrong week or had to arrange storage for recyclables until the appropriate week. It is also hoped that the single stream system will make recycling easier and that it will encourage greater community participation in recycling.

In a related development, Brown County recently reached a settlement with the Village of Hobart in the dispute over the Brown County Transfer Station. Currently, the transfer station collects garbage from the Green Bay area and prepares it for transfer to the Outagamie landfill as part of the tri-county agreement.

The Village of Hobart claimed that the transfer station was in violation of local zoning regulations and without required building permits. In resolution of the five-year dispute, the City of Green Bay will make a one-time payment of \$1.9 million and three annual payments of \$66,667 to the Village of Hobart to secure property values for residents around the transfer station. These funds will come from the Brown County Solid Waste Fund, not from county or municipal tax levies.

According to the Village of Hobart News, the agreement formalizes the rights of Hobart residents and affirms the Village's authority to plan, zone and permit as provided by State and local authority. Brown County Executive Tom Hintz said he was pleased to have finally resolved the matter, and that Green Bay was looking forward to continued positive relations with the Village. The settlement dismisses current litigation, cancels current fines, and allows the transfer station to continue operating at current capacity for the next 30 years.

Sony and RBRC Are Partners in Free Battery Recycling Program

Sony Electronics has announced that it has become the first electronics manufacturer to include rechargeable battery recycling collection bags with its products in a new partnership with the Rechargeable Battery Recycling Corporation (RBRC). Sony has begun inserting the "Call2Recycle" collection bags with the Sony VAIO notebook packaging to encourage consumers to recycle spent rechargeable batteries. Customers can put old batteries into the bags and drop them off at any of the more than 50,000 collection sites across the country at no cost. To read more about the joint program read the news release at



http://www.rbrc.org/call2recycle/releases/PR_02052008.pdf

Environmental News Briefs of Interest



Cell Phone Recycling is an Easy Call

The nation's leading cell phone makers, service providers, and retailers have teamed up with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to answer America's call for easy cell phone recycling. As part of EPA's Plug-In to eCycling program, partners supporting the cell phone recycling campaign include AT&T Wireless, Best Buy, LG Electronics, Motorola, Nokia, Office Depot, Samsung, Sony Ericsson, Sprint, Staples, and T-Mobile.

To kick-off the campaign, EPA recently released a series of print public service announcements, "Recycle Your Cell Phone. It's An Easy Call," which highlight the convenience and environmental and social benefits of recycling a cell phone. EPA also introduced a podcast that addresses many common questions on cell phone recycling.

EPA started the campaign because many consumers still do not know where or how they can recycle their unwanted cell phones. Consequently, less than 20 percent of unwanted cell phones are recycled each year. Information about the cell phone recycling campaign: <http://www.epa.gov/cellphone>
Information about the Plug-In to eCycling program: <http://www.epa.gov/plug-in/>

Fortune 500 Corporations Surpass EPA Green Power Goals

In response to EPA's nationwide challenge issued in December 2006, 53 Fortune 500 corporations are now collectively purchasing more than six billion kilowatt-hours (kWh) of green power annually. These purchases surpassed the goals set by EPA's Green Power Partnership by 130 percent and equal the avoided carbon dioxide emissions of more than 570 million gallons of gasoline each year or the equivalent amount of electricity needed to power nearly 670,000 average American homes annually. Intel Corporation leads the group as the top buyer with a purchase of 1.3 billion kilowatt-hours per year.

Green power is generated from renewable resources such as geothermal, biomass and biogas, as well as low-impact Green power resources produce no net increase to greenhouse view EPA's National Top 25 list of green power purchasers visit: <http://www.epa.gov/greenpower/toplists/top25.htm>.



solar, wind, hydropower, gas emissions. To

Reduce Storm Water Costs by Using Low Impact Development Practices

EPA recently released a new report "Reducing Stormwater Costs through Low Impact Development (LID) Strategies and Practices," which contains 17 case studies from across North America that show the economic viability of LID practices. Using these practices in construction projects can lower costs while improving environmental results.

LID practices are innovative stormwater management practices to manage urban stormwater runoff at its source. The goal is to mimic the way water moved through an area before it was developed by using design techniques that infiltrate, evapotranspire, and reuse runoff close to its source. Some common LID practices include rain gardens, grassed swales, cisterns, rain barrels, permeable pavements and green roofs. LID practices increasingly are used by communities across the country to help protect and restore water quality.

The report highlights examples that, in most cases, reduce project costs while improving environmental performance. Total capital savings ranged from 15 to 80 percent, with a few exceptions in which LID project costs were higher than conventional stormwater management costs. As LID practices become more common, it is likely that they will become cheaper to use. For a copy of the report: <http://www.epa.gov/owow/nps/lid/costs07/>

Dangers of Radon Overlooked

According to a recent EPA news release "breathing home indoor radon causes nearly one hundred times more deaths each year than carbon monoxide poisoning. Radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer behind smoking and some 20,000 people will die this year due to breathing too much radon without even knowing it."



Radon is an invisible radioactive gas that seeps into homes undetected through foundation cracks, and can reach harmful levels if trapped indoors. It travels up from underground sources of uranium in the earth's crust. EPA estimates that one in 15 homes will have a radon level of four PicoCuries per liter (pCi/L) of air or more, a level the agency considers high.

The radon threat is preventable with some simple steps. In existing homes, families can begin protecting themselves by buying an easy-to-use radon test kit to determine if a high level exists; if so, a high level might be lowered simply with a straight-forward radon venting system installed by a contractor. In new homes, builders can easily and economically include radon-resistant features during construction, and home buyers should ask for these. EPA also recommends that home buyers ask their builder to test for radon gas before they move in. For more information about radon, visit: <http://www.epa.gov/radon> or call 1-800-SOS-RADON (767-7236)

More Environmental News

Wisconsin Small Business Clean Air Assistance Program- *Clean Air Advisor*
<http://commerce.wi.gov/bd/BD-CA-Advisor.html>

Great Lakes Regional Pollution Prevention Roundtable-*Link*
<http://www.glrppr.org/newsletter/LINKwinter08.pdf>

National Pollution Prevention Roundtable-*P₂OST*
<http://www.p2.org/inforesources/JanuaryFebruary2008.cfm>

WI-DNR Public Meetings-February
<http://dnr.wi.gov/org/caer/ce/news/hearmeet.html#meetings>

Events, Training, Workshop and Tour Opportunities

February 27-29, 2008, **2008 Winter Solid Waste And Recycling Conference** is sponsored by AROW, SWANA and WCSWMA in Oshkosh. To register call 608-339-9178 or download the brochure at:
<http://www.arow-online.org/PDF/2008%20Conference%20Schedule-Flier.pdf>

March 10-12 2008, **FET Environment 08 Conference and Exhibition**. Wisconsin's largest conference for environmental professionals ongoing for 25 years, sponsored by FET in Milwaukee got to
<http://www.fetinc.org/> for details and registration

March 12-14, 2008, **Wisconsin Renewable Energy Summit**, Midwest Airlines Center, Milwaukee. The summit, "Green Jobs Growing Wisconsin's Economy", will focus on the role that renewable energy, such as wind power, solar energy, geothermal, green buildings and bio-energy technologies will play in supporting Wisconsin's economic well being. Growth of renewable energy businesses will create new green collar jobs in Wisconsin. Those jobs include manufacturers, installers, consultants, engineers, and associated professions. Renewable energy in Wisconsin has the potential to produce 35,000 jobs in the next 10 years. For more information go to www.renewableenergysummit.org