

Organics Subcommittee Meeting Summary

May 11, 2016, 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

MassDEP, One Winter Street, Boston, MA

All presentations are posted on the MassDEP website at

<http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/massdep/news/advisory-committees/swac-organics-subcommittee-.html>.

Introductions and MassDEP Updates

John Fischer of MassDEP provided three program updates.

Supermarket Recycling Certification Program

The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) and the Massachusetts Food Association (MassFood) began the Supermarket Recycling Certification Program by signing a Memorandum of Understanding in 2005. Through this voluntary program, supermarkets that agreed to go beyond compliance by establishing specific recycling, food waste diversion, and donation programs would receive regulatory relief under the waste bans, along with technical assistance through MassDEP. The program was a huge success, with more than 300 supermarket locations eventually participating – and helped to lay the groundwork for building the food composting infrastructure in Massachusetts.

However, now that the commercial organics waste ban is in place and with virtually all supermarkets with well-established programs, the program appears to have run its course. The program was providing little additional benefit to stores and it was difficult for both participating stores and MassDEP to keep up with the program requirements recently. After consultation with MassFood, MassDEP has decided to end the program. Current certifications will continue until they expire next year, but no new certifications will be issued. MassDEP will continue to support supermarkets through RecyclingWorks in Massachusetts, in the same way we are supporting other business sectors.

Organics Ban Evaluation

MassDEP will be hiring a consultant through the state's consulting services contract (PRF61) to conduct an assessment of the growth in food materials infrastructure and services in Massachusetts from 2010 to 2016. This assessment will cover hauling, composting, animal feed, food donation, anaerobic digestion, and on-site equipment sales. The consultant will assess growth in jobs and business activity in these sectors during that time frame and will assess impacts of the commercial organics ban in particular. MassDEP expects to select a consultant by the end of this month, and have study completed by early 2017.

EPA Environmental Merit Award

MassDEP is pleased to have been selected to receive an Environmental Merit Award from EPA New England for our work in reducing food waste. In addition to the MassDEP award, the Center for EcoTechnology, which manages the RecyclingWorks in Massachusetts program under contract to MassDEP, also received an award for their work in this area.

Save the Food: National Consumer Focused Food Waste Reduction Campaign

Ayaka Emoto of the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) gave a presentation via phone on NRDC's Save the Food Campaign done by the Ad Council. This presentation is posted along with this meeting summary. Attendees raised several questions and suggestions.

Comment: It would be useful if some of the outreach pieces could highlight specific actions that people can take to reduce food waste. Another attendee mentioned that a Tufts student had recently prepared a document in a brochure format that provides this type of guidance.

Response: As of now, this is not available on any of the campaign pieces. However, this type of guidance is featured on the campaign web site, www.savethefood.com.

Question: Will there be a radio component to the campaign?

Answer: The campaign expects to use some ad space on on-line radio media.

Question: Can all of the pieces on the website be used as is, without permission? What if someone wants to develop a more customized piece?

Answer: Yes any of the pieces on the website like PSAs, posters, etc. can be used as is without permission and this is encouraged. If anyone would like to do a more customized piece, or a co-branded piece, they should contact the Save the Food campaign to coordinate this.

Stop and Shop Anaerobic Digestion Facility

Kristina Stefanski and Roger Beliveau of Stop and Shop gave a presentation on Stop and Shop's programs to manage food waste through an anaerobic digestion facility located at their regional distribution center in Freetown, MA. This presentation is posted along with this meeting summary.

Question: Is the packaging used to deliver food waste to the anaerobic digestion facility reused and recycled?

Answer: Yes, whenever possible the plastic liners are used in other parts of Stop and Shop's operations and then recycled. The cardboard sleeves used to hold the food waste in place on plastic pallets are broken down and reused for as long as they maintain their integrity.

Question: How are the outputs from the anaerobic digestion facility used?

Answer: The gas is run through an on-site generator and used to produce electricity to power a portion of the facility's electricity need. The solid output will be delivered to nearby compost sites for further composting and the liquid will be recycled through the process when possible and eventually discharged as wastewater. Stop and Shop is interested in eventually selling the compost product in its stores. Approximately 5 percent of the material received is packaging material that is screened out prior to the digestion process.

Question: Was there additional training of store associates required for this process?

Answer: Store associates had already been separating food materials, both for food donation and for composting, so there was no need for a comprehensive training program. However, some additional training was provided on the specifics of this program.

Question: Does Stop and Shop expect to have any excess capacity to be able to accept any material from other sources?

Answer: At this point, they are still completing rolling out the program to all New England stores, so it is too early to answer this question. However this is not planned for at this time.

Question: Are there certain food materials that the digester cannot process?

Answer: Yes, materials like peach pits or bones will not break down in the digester and these are screened out. Stop and Shop sends meat products to rendering so that avoids sending those bones to the digester.

RecyclingWorks Compost Operator Training: Discussion of Training Needs and Opportunities

John Fischer of MassDEP reviewed technical assistance and training available to compost operators in Massachusetts through the RecyclingWorks in Massachusetts (RecyclingWorks) program. RecyclingWorks is a program fully funded by MassDEP and run under contract to MassDEP by the Center for EcoTechnology. The program provides information, guidance, and technical assistance to businesses and institutions in Massachusetts to help them reduce waste, and develop more effective recycling programs.

This year, the program was expanded to offer three categories of assistance to compost site operators:

1. Tier 1 Technical Assistance – This service provides a site visit, review of best management practices, and customized recommendations from an experienced consultant. This is available to any operations that are currently accepting or planning to accept food materials.
2. Tier 2 Technical Assistance – Tier 2 assistance is available to compost operators who have completed the Tier 1 assistance, but are looking for additional help and guidance.

This assistance level provides for a specified number of hours of consulting assistance to help an operator with any issues they are having.

3. Compost Operator Training Workshops – The program has held one compost operator training workshop (held in Worcester in March) and has a second scheduled for May 23 in Barnstable. These are ½ classroom workshops that cover all of the basics of composting, with an emphasis on composting operations that accept food materials.

MassDEP is currently working on future RecyclingWorks work plans and is interested in feedback and suggestions for how to best meet the assistance and guidance needs of compost operators in Massachusetts. Suggestions included:

- Hold additional workshops – potentially one in Northeast Mass.
- Consider making assistance available to compost operations that do not accept food materials

Please send any additional suggestions to John Fischer at MassDEP at john.fischer@state.ma.us and MassDEP will consider these suggestions in future program development.