

## **Organics Subcommittee Meeting Summary**

October 4, 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 announced that the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR) has issued proposed amendments to the Agricultural Composting Regulations at 330 CMR 25.00. MDAR will hold a public hearing on the proposed amendments on October 20, 2016 and the public comment period closes on October 20, 2016. For more information, please see the MDAR website at:

<http://www.mass.gov/eea/docs/agr/legal/regs/proposed/330-cmr-25-00-notice-of-public-hearing.pdf>

<http://www.mass.gov/eea/docs/agr/legal/regs/proposed/330-cmr-25-00-redline.pdf>

### **Review of ReFED Report: A Roadmap to Reduce US Food Waste by 20 Percent, Adam Rein, Mission Point Partners**

Adam Rein of Mission Point Partners provided a review of the recent ReFED report titled *A Roadmap to Reduce US Food Waste by 20 Percent*. Due to technical difficulties, this presentation was not available during the meeting, but it is posted now on the MassDEP web site and is available via the link at the top of this meeting summary. Participants raised several questions and comments.

**Question:** What is Centralized Anaerobic Digestion (AD)?

**Response:** The ReFED report considers AD at the scale of 40,000 TPY or more to be centralized AD. AD facilities smaller than this are considered to be small scale AD.

**Question:** With increasing food waste going to AD at waste water treatment plants (WWTP), there could be an increase in the nutrient loading in effluent from WWTP discharging to surface water bodies. How was this issue addressed in the ReFED report.

**Response:** Resource Recycling Systems (RRS) was the expert on organics for the Roadmap report. The assumption around WWTP AD facilities accepting food waste was that they are modern facilities that appropriately manage effluent and nutrient loading

**Comment:** Deer Island and Lawrence WWTP AD facilities process their bio-solids to make a fertilizer product so that these nutrients are not discharged as effluent.

**Question:** What are the best ways to leverage and attract capital?

**Response:** It is important for project proponents to emphasize all of the benefits of food waste reduction, recovery and recycling projects to potential investors. This includes environmental, economic and social benefits. The food supply chain is complicated with many points of intervention. The ReFED report attempts to point out areas where investments can have the greatest impact.

**Comment:** In addition to removing barriers to compost use, we also need to focus on markets for all organic derived products such as digestate material from AD facilities.

**Comment:** It may be useful to focus on the upcoming Farm Bill as an opportunity to advance food waste reduction policies at the federal level.

**Response:** ReFed has prepared a two-page brief on Federal policy initiatives. In this policy memo, ReFED focuses on issues where there is broad bi-partisan agreement and relatively little controversy.

### **Review of MassDEP Organics Action Plan, John Fischer, MassDEP**

John Fischer of MassDEP provided an overview of MassDEP's Organics Action Plan. This presentation is posted on the MassDEP web site, along with this meeting summary. Participants then discussed connections between the ReFED Roadmap report and suggestions for improving the Massachusetts Organics Action Plan. Comments and questions included:

**Comment:** Most generators do not know about the waste bans or recycling and composting. There is a need for better media attention and education on the waste bans and the organic waste ban so that more businesses know about the ban and that they need to comply. MassDEP also needs to enforce the waste ban better. There should also be more recognition for green activities – e.g. providing a “window sticker” to facilities that are composting.

**Response:** MassDEP conducted extensive media outreach around the October 1, 2014 organic waste ban rollout. Mass DEP is willing to speak to any groups interested in learning more about the organic waste ban or waste bans in general. In addition, the RecyclingWorks in Massachusetts program also holds meetings to help educate businesses about the waste bans and how they can comply. In conducting outreach on the commercial organics waste ban, it is important to reach only those that need to comply with the ban – that is businesses that dispose of one ton or more of food material per week. If the outreach is too broad it could cause confusion among businesses that are not subject to the ban, but may think they are.

**Question:** What can MassDEP do to improve the collection infrastructure for entities below the one ton/week threshold?

**Response:** MassDEP believes that organics collection for smaller food waste generators will gradually more cost effective as the collection infrastructure continues to grow and route density improves. The RecyclingWorks in Massachusetts program worked with a group of smaller food waste generators in Lenox to develop an organics collection program. This project is featured on the RecyclingWorks web site. This is available as a [written case study](#) and as a [video](#).

**Comment:** For many facilities, particularly anaerobic digestion facilities, it is important to maintain a clean stream of food materials that does not include other products such as cutlery,

paper products, and plastics. There is a range of biodegradable/compostable materials and a range of processing capabilities across the state. It is important to understand the specifications that a particular processor needs.

**Question:** Many generators that are using sink grinders to manage their food materials. Does this cause an issue with nutrient loading and wasting potable water?

**Response:** Businesses and institutions can comply with the commercial organics waste ban in a variety of ways. The compliance standard is that they do not dispose of one ton or more of food material per week in the trash. Because different waste water systems may have different standards for what they allow, MassDEP recommends that any business using a waste water based system first consult with their local waste water utility to determine what is allowable.

**Question:** Are there plans for a simpler, shorter permitting requirement for very small scale composting operations?

**Response:** Most compost operations are required to obtain a general permit certification. There is no fee for this certification. Certain very small municipal food waste collection sites are exempt under these regulations and do not require any permit, just an initial notification. For specific requirements for these, please see the MassDEP web site at

<http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/massdep/recycle/regulations/310-cmr-16-000.html>.

**Question:** Does the Commonwealth plan to spend money on public outreach on food waste reduction?

**Response:** As far as outreach relative to the commercial food waste disposal ban in particular, MassDEP believes that a broad outreach campaign is not a good fit, as businesses only need to comply if they dispose of more than one ton or more of food material per week. For that purpose, MassDEP and RecyclingWorks are focusing on more targeted outreach, such as working with trade associations and chambers of commerce. For residential food waste, MassDEP is interested in opportunities to leverage and promote the national Save The Food campaign. For more information see <http://savethefood.com/>.

**Comment:** Haulers are in a difficult position with waste bans. They do not want to tell their customers not to put contaminants in the food waste or recycling stream because the customer might switch to another hauler. This makes it difficult for haulers to stop contamination. It would be helpful for MassDEP to communicate more directly to generators.

**Response:** MassDEP is continuing to conduct waste ban inspections with the goal of establishing a level playing field that pushes all generators and haulers to comply with the waste ban. In addition, RecyclingWorks is available to work with haulers and to provide technical assistance. MassDEP is also willing to speak to groups or to individual companies about waste ban compliance.

**Question:** Is there any incentive for municipalities with leaf and yard waste compost operations to start accepting food materials?

**Response:** Municipalities can apply for Sustainable Materials Recovery Program (SMRP) grants to expand or improve compost operations for food materials. Technical assistance for compost operations that are taking or want to begin accepting food materials is available from the RecyclingWorks program.

**Comment:** Management and composting of leaves and yard waste is a pretty dependable and stable market. There are state contracts for use of compost materials for a variety of uses.

**Comment:** It would be helpful to hold a forum to bring together compost operations, landscapers, construction companies, and other stakeholders to discuss how to grow and improve compost markets.

### **Food De-packaging Infrastructure in Massachusetts – Updates from Facility Developers**

Ben Harvey of EL Harvey & Sons, Moe Banville of RecycleWorks Inc. and Mark Troiano of Troiano Trucking each provided brief updates on their development of systems to accept and process packaged food materials. MassDEP has posted these presentations on the MassDEP web site along with this meeting summary.

**Question:** In what types of cases do customers require food de-packaging services?

**Answer:** There are a variety of circumstances when this is necessary. On a regular basis, companies have food that does not meet specifications either due to packaging or food quality or safety issues. Companies also have one-time needs to manage packaged food such as spoiled food due to power outages or truck accidents.

**Question:** Do your facilities require a clean stream to process these materials?

**Answer:** All of the de-packaging units can effectively handle packaging materials such as cardboard, plastic and metal containers. Glass is the only material that cannot be accepted in these systems because it breaks and falls through into the separated food stream.

**Question:** Does RecycleWorks accept loads smaller than full truck loads, from sources such as schools?

**Answer:** Yes, RecycleWorks will accept smaller loads and is working on a specific program for those loads.

**Question:** Do you recycle the packaging that is separated from the food materials?

**Answer:** Yes, all of the facilities will recycle packaging material to the maximum extent possible. In some cases, this may not be possible if the packaging material has too much residual food material.

**Question:** Does EL Harvey plan to run all of the incoming food material it accepts through the separator, or only the packaged material?

**Answer:** Only the packaged material will go through the separator. Food materials that are already being source separated will continue to go directly to composting or AD facilities.

**Question:** Grocery stores are currently de-packaging some materials by hand. Do you think these de-packaging facilities will change these practices?

**Answer:** Yes, the panelists agreed that this might change how supermarkets manage their packaged food materials that require disposal. In some cases, this may allow for more material to be diverted to composting, anaerobic digestion, or animal feed.

**Question:** Do you expect to increase business due to this new equipment and capacity?

**Answer:** Yes, with capital equipment investments like this we hope for and expect increased business to generate a good return on investment. The panelists agreed that there is significant new business opportunity for managing these materials.

**Question:** To what extent are the packaged food materials going for de-packaging safe to donate to food banks?

**Answer:** That decision is typically up to the customers that are generating the packaged food materials. In many cases, this material is not safe to donate because of potential expiration date or contamination issues.

**Question:** Can these facilities take full/partial truck loads on an unscheduled basis?

**Answer:** Yes, all of the panelists expect to have the ability and capacity to take unscheduled loads.