

Organics Management to Reduce Methane and Climate Change Workgroups

Meeting #7 Notes (October 21, 2-4pm)

- I. Welcome and Agenda Overview
- II. Recruit people to help write policy in subcommittee (to then bring back to the bigger group)
 - a. Majken Ryherd, Logan Harvey, Laurie Davies (Ecology), Wendy Weiker, Andy Smith, Aaron Czyzewski (specifically for food rescue) volunteered
 - b. If interested in policy subcommittee, send an email to Sam at skwok@cplusc.com
 - c. Policies discussed so far (excluding food waste topic)
 - i. Topic #2: Sectors & Sources
 1. Starting January 1, 2027, require all jurisdictions to provide organic waste collection services to all residents and businesses and recycle organic materials using recycling facilities such as anaerobic digestion facilities that create biofuel and electricity and composting facilities that make soil amendments.
 2. Early phase in: Require all commercial businesses and multifamily buildings (over xx units) to have an organics collections service.
 - ii. Topic #3: Financials, Soil Health and Regenerative Agriculture
 1. Procurement Requirements: Using Recycled Organics Products (based on CA1383) – Starting January 1, 2024, require cities and counties to procure annually a quantity of recovered organic waste products.
 2. Beginning January 1, 20xx, Dept. of Agriculture must create a 3-year compost reimbursement pilot program for farming operations purchasing and using compost products from WA (from HB 2713).
- III. Continue Topic #4 Policy Discussion: Energy Generation/Credits/Carbon Sequestration/Nutrient Recovery/Incentives/Equity

a. Policy 1: Adding Incentives to Procurement for Using Recycled Organics Products

Strengths/Concerns/Issues/Questions

- Logan H.: Are there financial benefits to using WSDOT? Is it going to save money and time in terms of barriers and highway erosion? If it does, can make a financial case. Other piece is the cost of compost because there aren't enough compost facilities in Washington. Is this on the radar for WSDOT – presented other benefits of using compost?
- Laurie D.: It's hard to react to general statement like "we want to improve" procurement. Ecology has worked with WSDOT over the years, and they are currently procuring and implementing use of compost that meets their specifications. Need to be careful about what incentive we want WSDOT to use. Many farmers want to purchase and use as much compost as they want to use, but there are regulatory issues that limit what they can use. There are many compost facilities out there to provide compost. The issue is with ability to move compost and make it available as needed.
 - Samantha W.: Echo what Laurie was saying. WSDOT did a lot of research on compost 10-15 years ago. They have strict guidelines. There is a form, and they have metrics they have used for most erosion control programs especially on I-5 corridor. Should not lump DOT with Agriculture – need to separate two things and need separate programs for these.

WSDOT

- Jay B.: Agrees with Laurie and Samantha. Doing a good job using it.
- Heather T.: WSDOT problems with plastic in compost – spec is for finer screen to help this. Question is do we need a finer screen for everything?
 - Samantha W.: In 2012, DOT changed the standard from fine and medium compost – screen size is manageable. Did a lot of work with facilities to figure out what contamination was an issue and research about what to do. Eastside uses fine and coarse. Westside uses fine and medium.
 - Jay B.: Issue was with contamination. Solving that issue would help move things in the desired direction.
- Mary H.: Along with cost, farmers do not always have access to equipment for spreading - and/or all the spreaders are in use at the same time.
 - Dawn M.: Ecology has not heard from WDOT that cost is the issue in use. As Sam and Jay said, contamination has been the challenge.

Ag/Farms

- Sejo J.: I think we have found that price of the compost actually is a barrier for increased use, not that they don't want to use it, but can't afford to.

b. Policy 2: Providing funding for equipment

Strengths/Concerns/Issues/Questions

- Mary H.: Along with cost, farmers do not always have access to equipment for spreading - and/or all the spreaders are in use at the same time.
- Laurie D.: What would be the source of the funding – where would it come from? Doesn't think there's an appetite for using existing grant funding sources and most of what ecology has are funding sources to government and public entities. There would need to be a source of funding.
 - Wendy W.: What criteria would there be for farmers to get funding and equipment? How does that tie to the organics processor?
 - Andy S.: If 'funding' also includes interest free loans and loan forgiveness for small/low income farmers, it could be a good public-private role for government/state (under writing the risk, etc.)
- Samantha W.: Thinks it's a great idea. In addition to funding, concern is as a pass through for the conservation districts. There should be a fee – compost can be corrosive and will need maintenance.
- Logan H.: Is there a need to create demand or a need to create more supply? Should we be spending money on creating more facilities before this?

c. Policy 3: Create target for carbon sequestration and certification for organics byproducts

Strengths/Concerns/Issues/Questions

Adding a target

- Heather T.: In a way, this is a placeholder because we don't have the results of the study back.
- Neil E.: Attempted to do this in CA, but the ag community sees it as a first step towards a mandate and are largely opposed. Hard to establish targets if you don't know what the existing conditions are. CA Dept. of Food & Ag have plans to do organic soil mapping program and are trying to get it completed in the next few years in order to have a better understanding of where the targets would be biggest bang for buck at increasing soil carbon sequestration. In 2019, UC Davis study identified accomplishing a way to increase carbon in soil with multiple approaches including compost.
- Andy S.: So, is the target at a project level - so payments for increasing soil carbon by X by activities Y and compost application is one of the Y? Similar to the UK's natural capital-based payments to farmers?
 - Sejo J.: That makes sense to me Andy. I was just thinking about suggesting a "carbon sink" farm pilot program or something like that. Funding still issue in my mind. And not sure that can scale quickly enough to do what is needed.
- Andy S.: UK has a natural path framework – so activities on a farm that increase carbon in soil allows them to get paid. Framework to value soil carbon and then role of compost is an avenue to explore. It's all linked together.
 - Heather T.: Yes, that is the idea. Need to know the actual value in WA State conditions so we could do those kind of credits for farmers.
 - Andy S.: A bit on the [UK approach](#) - reward farmers for management practices that improve soil health by improving soil structure, soil organic matter, and soil biology offer payments of between £26 and £70 per hectare (estimated). These payment rates are annual.
- Samantha W.: Who is going to pay for it? Will the compost go to farmers? How will we pay the farmers for their sequestration credits? Do we have an idea of how it gets paid for?
 - Heather T.: We do!
 - Andy S.: Funding piece is a big question. No way now to access future climate funding, but having an evidence-based framework will allow us to access carbon markets in the future. Value could be sold on open market – hopefully WSU work will create the framework.
 - Sejo J.: How about a tax on ag land sold for development and taken out of ag use, to finance ag carbon sequestration. Or something out of the box like that? But I think what Andy is speaking to right now is more on track.
 - Peter G.: Would have issues with tax on land for development.
- Neil E.: What is WA's direction? CA has a cap-and-trade program whereas many wanted more of a carbon tax. Cap and trade develops carbon credits that are auctioned quarterly and has created a lot of revenue. There is high demand for carbon credits – price goes up and the money is used to fund the health soil program. 62% of projects included compost use.
 - Kate K.: California uses cap and trade dollars to pay for soil health projects. The state department of food and ag administers the program.

Certification

- Kate K.: Compost already has a certification program, STA, through the US Composting Council.
- Laurie D.: Certification indicates a development and acceptance of standards. Although research on biochar is good, it is all over the map in terms of criteria. This would be very hard to do at this point.
 - Heather T.: Point of doing certification would be to make people more comfortable using it?
 - Laurie D.: We are premature. Technology and research is not there yet to set those standards.

d. Policy 4: In Climate Commitment Act (SB 5126) include local government and district funding for technical assistance and education under Climate Commitment Account.

Strengths/Concerns/Issues/Questions

- Carl S.: Authorizing the use of account to spend money on activities doesn't necessarily appropriate the funds. Need a commitment to fund. Eligibility is not enough.
 - Heather T.: The idea is to make it eligible explicitly.
- Peter G.: Changes to language of CCA will require follow-up legislation, which might be hard since the bill just passed.
- Logan H.: For small cities, it is always a challenge. If it is coming from the state, then it works. But it would be a challenge if it is cities trying to find the funding themselves. It's important that there be standards set up – so it is equal between cities. Messaging is really important.

IV. Presentations to share background on Topic #5: Permitting/Air/Water/Odors/Monitoring

- a. Chris Seney, Director, Organics Operations for Republic Services
 - i. Discussion included the different acceptable materials lists between residential and commercial and whether the list is the same statewide or based on the acceptance criteria of the receiving facility. The list of acceptable materials in the residential and commercial organics and recycling bin is determined by each recycling facility, and varies depending on local infrastructure. Discussion also included mention of Republic Service's compost facility in Chula Vista, CA, which can compost 200 tons per day of green waste and food waste.
- b. Tim Trohimovich, Futurewise (re zoning regulations)
 - i. Question arose of whether any jurisdictions have compost already allowed in zoning explicitly (a number of counties and cities do), the handful of CA jurisdictions is identified in the Zoning Code and U.S. Composting Council finalizing model Zoning Ordinance language for distribution.
 - ii. Answer from Tim: Whatcom County provides for composting in two of its zones. In its Agriculture zone, Whatcom County Code Section 20.40.100 provides that the following types of composting are accessory uses and ancillary uses to the primary agricultural uses. In the second zone, the Rural Industrial and Manufacturing (RIM) District, Whatcom County Code Section 20.69.050 provides that the following uses are permitted uses, so they are allowed outright and can be the primary use of the property.
- c. Pierce Louis, Dirt Hugger
 - i. Question: What are the top three regulations that could be reformed to improve the ease of developing more commercial compost facilities? Pierce said (1) unifying VOC emissions and how to regulate across the state, (2) looking at composting as a net benefit and letting that industry grow and guide them through solid waste permitting side, (3) really solidifying BMP so that facilities are operated with BMP and doing the right things.
- d. Tom Jobson, WSU (re air emission study)
 - i. Discussion included whether increased composting is a net benefit, how less is probably known about greenhouse gas emissions from composting, and the timeline for the WSU pilot program, which was delayed by COVID and may be moving forward this

winter with emissions testing in 2022. Ecology would also like WSU to be in a position to test facilities. Discussion also included CA's study that concluded that composting facilities and managing them reduces VOCs from about 90% versus leaving them to decompose in whatever environment originally produced, toxic air contaminants as another consideration for air emissions, and the EREF program that includes trials with food waste feedstocks.

- V. Next meeting: 11/4, 2-4pm
 - a. Continue Topic #5 discussion and presentations for Topic #6
- VI. Meeting notes and presentations will be posted on www.OrganicsWorkgroup.org