King County Organics Recycling Summits

Summary of Activities

March – April 2019

INTRODUCTION

King County hosted two full-day summits on organics recycling: the first was held on March 6 and the second on April 17. Participants[1] included public sector representatives from solid waste, wastewater treatment, clean air, public health, procurement, housing interests, and universities; haulers; composters and processors; tribes; buyers and users of compost; and finally, advocacy and community organizations.

WORK GROUP PURPOSE

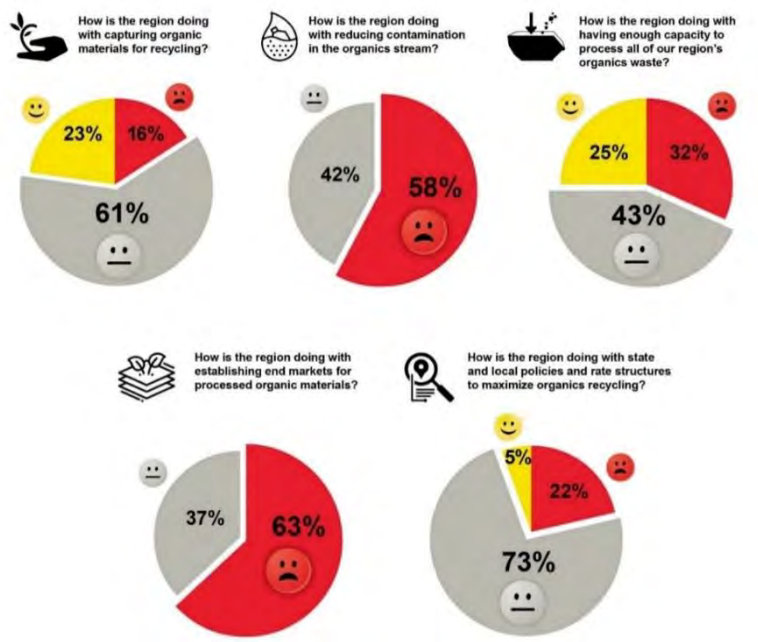
- Gather stakeholder input that helps identify and prioritize actions to expand and enhance organics recycling and ensure a sustainable organics recycling system for the future.
- Set the stage for participating organizations to work together in the future on the solutions identified.

VISION STATEMENT

Organic material is prevented, reduced, recycled and ultimately reused locally, creating a self-sustaining regional organics system that minimizes waste, promotes healthier soils and protects the environment.

SUMMIT #1 ACTIVITY: REGIONAL PERSPECTIVES

Attendees placed a happy, neutral or sad sticker reflecting their perspectives/opinions of five questions:



[1] See detailed attendee list on the final page of this document.

SUMMIT #1: SYNTHESIZED INFORMATION GAPS AND ACTION ITEMS

This section shows the notes captured in Summit #1 with added details and next steps. Some items have been condensed or combined for clarity or to remove duplicates. The tables include challenges and opportunities identified by the work group as well as the action items and information gaps discussed in the afternoon session. The topics highlighted in gray were a focus of Summit #2; the non-highlighted items already have clear next steps, are being handled by the work of King County or others, or will be tasks for a to-be-formed organics recycling committee.

WASTED RESOURCES	
Information Gaps	**Next Steps**
- Analysis of effectiveness and diversion rates of different organics systems including those that are food-only versus those that accept packaging (mid priority)	- TBD
- Research on best practices for communication around purchase dates and use-by dates to help reduce food waste (low priority)	- EPA's Food Too Good to Waste program has this information. Let this effort be led by food waste prevention campaigns being conducted by others. (ongoing)
Action Items	**Next Steps**
- Need a clear, **consistent region-wide vision for organics recycling** (high priority)	- Draft vision statements to be presented and discussed at Summit #2 on April 17th with goal of the group adopting a vision statement (Q2)
- **Standardize organics recycling protocols and contracts** across multiple jurisdictions (mid priority)	- TBD (this could be a task of the organics contamination workgroup) - Cities lead
- Back legislation that supports a **sustainable organics recycling system in the region** (mid priority)	- Support is individually determined by organizations and people involved in the organics recycling industry (ongoing)
- Increase food rescue efforts to **decrease wasted food in the organics recycling stream** (mid priority)	- Individual organizations should support local food rescue efforts (ongoing)
- **Focus on using durables** to reduce food packaging entering the organics recycling stream (mid priority)	- Individual organizations should include messaging to encourage durables in their consumer outreach efforts (ongoing)

CONTAMINATION	
Information Gaps	**Next Steps**
- Determine what makes up the contamination in the organics recycling stream and make a recommendation regarding contaminant focus including which contaminants processors are already removing from the stream (high priority) o If possible, determine material types and brands	- King County conducting waste characterization analysis and a review of existing research sources (Q2)

- Determine why contamination is getting in organic recycling carts – what consumer behaviors are leading to contamination? (high priority)	- King County to scope consumer research to identify residential behaviors driving contamination (Q2-3)
- Clarify compostable versus non-compostable packaging across jurisdictions (mid priority)	- Processors, haulers and local jurisdictions should make this information more accessible. Encourage future collaboration with producers of these materials to clarify and standardize labeling and messaging. (Q2-4)
Action Items	**Next Steps**
- Need **for regional organics contamination committee** (e.g., Recycle Right / Responsible Recycling Task Force) (high priority)	- King County to coordinate setting up an ongoing organics recycling committee after the summits (ongoing)
- Create a **consistent messaging approach** including naming, terminology and lists of compostable and non-compostable items to reduce consumer confusion. Include transcreated messaging in this effort. (mid priority)	- King County to coordinate an ongoing organics recycling committee after the summits
- **Determine and communicate most effective ways to deal with greenwashing claims** that confuse consumers about the compost-ability of packaging products (low priority)	- Focus item for Summit #2 - TBD (new state legislation, HB 1569, may help address this)
- Create a **regional media campaign** to reduce contamination (high priority)	- King County lead on creating a compost contamination reduction behavior change campaign that is a sister effort to the "Empty, Clean & Dry" campaign that is addressing recycling contamination. Campaign to launch in fall 2019. (Q2-4)
- **Expand enforcement tactics** including cart tagging and violator household/business specific enforcement steps (high priority)	- Focus item for Summit #2
- Jurisdictions, haulers and processors **collaborate to share information and resources**, including code and compliance information (mid priority)	- Incorporate information sharing into to-be-formed organics recycling committee (ongoing)
- Increase use of **new technologies to reduce contamination** in the organics stream (mid priority)	- Focus item for Summit #2
- **Grants** focused on reducing contamination (low priority)	- King County City WRR grants and Ecology grants could encourage grant funding to address contamination

PROCESSING CAPACITY	
Information Gaps	**Next Steps**
- Research existing organics recycling systems with greater regional coordination (e.g., CA) (high priority)	- TBD

- Compile data and research on the costs of processing organics into compost, including potential methods of reducing costs and billing transparency (e.g., itemizing organics recycling costs on utility bills) (high priority)	- Cedar Grove to present on this topic at Summit #2 (Q2)
- Understand current and upcoming chemical challenges impacting compost quality	- TBD
Action Items	**Next Steps**
- **Increase processing capacity** including taking full advantage of existing capacity (high priority), investigating **decentralized processing** facilities, and **improving siting and permitting processing** while also **taking odor issues and impacts on communities** into consideration	- Focus item for Summit #2
- Revive effort to **encourage at-home composting** for residents including backyard composting and worm bins	- Focus item for Summit #2
- Increase **coordination between policymakers and organics recycling stakeholders**, including tax benefits and green incentives (mid priority)	- Focus item for Summit #2
- **Improve processing facility communications** with neighbors and public (mid priority)	- Processing companies take the lead on this

END MARKETS	
Information Gaps	**Next Steps**
- **Increase research on the value, costs and benefits of compost use** versus alternatives, particularly for agriculture (high priority)	- Researcher from UW to share research on this topic at Summit #2
- Identify research **growth trends** in compost markets, including new technologies (high priority)	- WISErg and Impact Bioenergy representatives to share info on this topic at Summit #2
- Identify **motivators and barriers** for different audiences to buy more compost (or start buying compost) (mid priority)	- King County-funded research will fill some public sector gaps. Investment in market research would help with the broader range of audiences.
- Gather **data on transportation costs and logistics** for getting compost to eastern WA (e.g. for agricultural markets) (mid priority)	- Researcher from UW to share information on this topic at Summit #2
- Understand the **current process and enforcement methods** from King County soil inspectors (mid priority)	- King County-funded research will set up interviews with soil inspectors and share information
- Understand current compost demand/trends through procurement audits (low priority)	- King County-funded research will offer some insight on this issue, but further coordination with KC and city procurement departments is needed.

Action Items	Next Steps
- **Evidence the value, costs and benefits of compost use** versus alternatives, particularly for agriculture (high priority)	- Focus item for Summit #2
- **Understand and streamline** how specifiers, purchasers and enforcers approach compost **use in public projects**	- Focus item for Summit #2
- Increase **education about benefits of compost** (e.g. value engineering, green economics) consistent with the **growth trends** and new opportunities for compost use (high priority)	- Focus item for Summit #2

SUMMIT #2 ACTIVITY: SOLUTIONS, NEXT STEPS AND OUR PATH FORWARD

In the second summit, break-out groups worked together to identify solutions and next steps for 3-5 action items. Items in red were added by the group during the activity. Following summaries of each discussion back to the full group, participants were asked to identify who should support work related to the solutions and next steps. Organizations listed here either were volunteered by their own personnel or nominated by other participants.

CONTAMINATION			
Action Items	**Solutions**	**Next Steps**	**Who should help support?**
Determine and communicate most effective ways to deal with greenwashing claims that confuse consumers about the compost-ability and toxicity [addition] of packaging products	- Policy and legislation - Legislation - 1569 HB – just passed and includes provisions for requiring that bags and utensils can't be green or brown unless they are approved as compostable by the local processor. It also requires all compostable products to be green or brown – not white. - Use colors (once uniform) to make messaging more straightforward to residents - Consider not allowing service ware at all in the organics stream like they do in Portland. - Serious dedication to education, then can move on to R&D – do not pull items out at this point because it will only confuse people more. - Continued workgroup/ taskforce that meets on a regular cadence so that we all are sharing/coordinating - Deal with the biggest problems first – for example, there are some big brands that supply service ware to stadiums who have stopped making compostable products. We need to start upstream to tackle. - Cedar Grove is looking at banning PFAs/not accepting them in facilities	- Form regional group that meets on ongoing basis - Regular summits on this topic - Identify and prioritize "problems" - Keep group updated on 1569 HB	- SPU - Cedar Grove - City of Seattle - King County SWD - Republic Services - Washington Organic Recycling Council - Washington State Recycling Association
Expand enforcement tactics including cart tagging and violator household/business specific enforcement steps	- Tag consistently across King County - But if tagging, must be prepared to enforce to ensure compliance (need inspectors)	- Interview cities to determine their barriers for implementing cart tagging programs, then design action items based on how we overcome those	- WA Department of Ecology, Work Plan 2020 - King County SWD, SWAC, MSWMAC

	- All cities utilize the tagging BMPs created by City of Kirkland - Put tagging requirement into hauler contracts (they create tags and put tags on carts) - Create a list of all agencies that have cart tagging programs, and have King County send out that list to all cities calling out the success stories so that city councils/mayors wonder why they aren't on the list - Tap community volunteers – City of Bothell is tagging using volunteers in partnership with the school district (12- week school project). Build a form and put on phone/iPad to collect data. - Create a tagging toolkit with public agencies and haulers working together, which would include best practices and/or case studies as well as sample contract language (Cascadia has a sample that could be a starting point) - More research needed into why it's happening (commercial, single-family, multifamily) - Conduct analysis of 39 cities and contracts that are up soon and make sure contract language is in place - work with waste contract consultants/influencers to ensure - King County can ask UTC for cart tagging programs in certain permitting areas; UTC can require hauler to do it. - Testify at city council meetings - For cities that don't want to be "mean", share Kirkland's successes that ease this concern - Draft letter template that residents can send to elected officials saying they want it – work with community organization to manage - Identify hyper-local influencers in each community who can help advocate. This could	barriers (assign committee members to do interviews) - Make a list of all cities and counties that are currently doing tagging - King County SWD to promote Kirkland's tagging BMPs and urge cities to adopt them - Determine as a group what would be in a tagging "toolbox" for cities - Conduct analysis of 39 King County cities to determine which contracts are up soon - Developing transcreated materials toolkit (for tagging)	- Republic Services - Waste Management - Recology - Local university projects (for packaging issue) - Kirkland - SPU - Cities, where feasible

	even be formalized like Master Gardeners (Master Taggers). - Make and use clear yard waste carts so you can see what's inside		
Increase use of new technologies and services [addition] to reduce contamination in organics stream	- Group overall felt that this action item was lower priority than focusing upstream and on service. However, the group acknowledged that education can't eliminate contamination on its own. It must go hand in hand with new and better technologies - Use public/private partnerships to help fund exploration and implementation of new technologies, and to promote those technologies	- None identified	- MRF operators (and see if they share with compost operators)
Need for regional organics contamination committee (e.g., Recycle Right / Responsible Recycling Task Force)	- Create a group that meets regularly - Have very tangible action items that the group works on in each meeting. Assign "who" to each action item. - This group can take on many of the next steps/action items in cart tagging above - Group could work to develop a brand and campaigns/promotions.	- Identify what is the lowest hanging fruit of what we will address: easiest way to address contamination reduction. For example: o Working with violator residents? Or awareness raising campaign? Other? o Commercial vs. residential vs. mixed use - Once the action items are determined, assign people and find out who the people we need to connect with to make them happen – for example product or package designers may be one group	- King County SWAC - King County SWD - Republic Services - SPU - Kirkland - Waste Management - WA Department of Ecology - Recology
New Action Item: Target education/outreach on waste prevention - how we can consume/generate less waste and not just what can and can't go in the bin. Educate on making smart buying decisions to avoid waste	- Deal with upstream and consumption decisions - Need to define more in a future meeting; no time to dig in on this during the summit	- Partner with universities like Seattle University	- SPU - King County SWD - Haulers - Cedar Grove - Sustainable packaging coalition

(e.g. not just food but packaging around food, etc.)			
New Action Item: Develop an organics contamination campaign	- Develop campaign(s) that target 1) Generators (consumption/purchasing) and 2) End Users (residential and commercial/institutional) - Identify influencers who can amplify education and promotion	- Create list of influencers and map influencers by objective and audience	- King County (current efforts will partially address this item)

PROCESSING CAPACITY			
Action Items	**Solutions**	**Next Steps**	**Who should help support?**
Increase processing capacity including taking full advantage of existing capacity, investigating decentralized processing facilities, and improving siting and permitting processing while also taking odor issues and impacts on communities into consideration	- Include discussion of increasing capacity in solid waste management plan messaging - Nurture existing capacity and make connection with processing of trash and recycling; all processing capacity is tied together - Buyers (especially municipalities) should leverage their purchasing power to create larger markets for end products, incentivizing more processing capacity - [Suggestion from large group] Actual organics (food waste) stock and flow mapping, and overlaying with actual organics capacity	- Holistic/integrated review of processing capacity supply and the need (not only organics) - Evaluation of processing options besides composting, including goals, markets, value add, land use and siting feasibility, and GHG reduction - Odor issues: Cedar Grove and other processors to work with impacted communities	- King County SWD commercial organics grant - Cedar Grove - King County SWD - Waste Management - Department of Ecology - Department of Commerce (for stock and flow mapping solution)
Revive effort to encourage at-home composting for residents including backyard composting and worm bins	- Use Impact Bioenergy as example of permitting success for a smaller, decentralized facility	- None identified	- SPU - Tilth Alliance - WSU (including Master Composters and Master Gardeners)
Increase coordination between policymakers and organics recycling stakeholders, including tax benefits and green incentives	- Ongoing dialogue, especially for acceptance standards - Review solid waste management plan policies (consider wastewater treatment plants as potential processor)	- None identified	- Department of Commerce - Public Health Seattle & King County

	- Establish clear goals for waste processing: diversion vs. reduction vs. GHG mitigation vs. other?		

END MARKETS			
Action Items	**Solutions**	**Next Steps**	**Who should help support?**
Evidence the value, costs and benefits of compost use versus alternatives, particularly environmental benefits (Note: This action item was reframed by the group to shift focus away from agriculture.)	- Leverage partnerships with King County Farms or create new ones - Incorporate Pacific Coast Collaborative (PCC) steps on carbon sequestration to develop policies and subsidies to support use - Incorporate the cost of carbon into projects in King County - Focus on GHG benefits and partner with influencers active in the climate debate (Jay Inslee)	- Simplify messaging around compost uses and best practices - Conduct a literature review to see existing studies	- UW & WSU (existing work happening) - Seattle connects King County etc. to PCC soil project - WA Department of Ecology - Washington Organic Recycling Council - USCC market development committee
Understand and streamline how specifiers, purchasers and enforcers approach compost use in public projects	- Better understand uses and needs for DOT and Parks projects - Provide tools for City and County solid waste staff to take to other departments - Counties and cities continue to specify, but there is a need to figure out the enforcement process	- King County and Cascadia to complete related research and stakeholder engagement	- Washington Organic Recycling Council - City of Kirkland - Seattle Public Utilities - City of Auburn - King County - Projects with local universities (like Seattle University)
Increase education about benefits of compost (e.g. value engineering, green economics) consistent with the growth trends and new opportunities for compost use	- Find our local innovators (e.g. community gardens) - Schools could incorporate into curriculum and are also a market - **Engage design community (architects, civil, landscape, mechanical) with local haulers [Addition from large group "post-it" exercise]**	- None identified	- Waste Management - WA Department of Ecology - Washington Organic Recycling Council - "Kiss the ground" - King County Master Gardeners - Recology

New Action: Further develop consumer market	- Relink for consumers where compost comes from, which would also help with contamination Develop on-cart signage to help create a link for what organic material becomes (i.e. compost) - Make a case for people to use what they produce (example: Cedar Grove's "My Five") - Create an incentive for people to buy back compost through discounts on their bill - Leveraging affinity groups and create more ownership in the end product with local co-branding and signage that explains "this is your food/yard waste"	- None identified	- King County Master Composters and Master Gardeners – one potential source of resources - Tilth Alliance

SUMMIT ATTENDEE LIST

King County		Attended Summit 1	Attended Summit 2
Andrew Smith	KC Solid Waste Division (SWD)	X	
Annie Kolb-Nelson	KC Communications		X
Ashley Mihle	KC Wastewater Treatment Division (WTD) Compost Project Manager	X	X
Christie True	KC Dept. of Natural Resources (DNRP) DO	X	X
Dorian Waller	KC SWD Gov Relations Admin	X	
Gerty Coville	KC Solid Waste Division (SWD)	X	X
Jeff Gaisford	KC Solid Waste Division (SWD)	X	X
Josh Marx	KC Solid Waste Division (SWD)	X	X
Karen Hamilton	KC Procurement	X	
Pat McLaughlin	KC Solid Waste Division (SWD)	X	X
Rebecca Singer	KC Wastewater Treatment Division (WTD) Resource Recovery	X	X
Yolanda Pon	King County Public Health	X	X
Public Sector			
Andy Bary	Washington State University (WSU)	X	
April Atwood	Seattle University	X	X
Dan Corum	City of Tacoma	X	X
Dawn Marie Maurer	Department of Ecology		X
Eddy Chu	Muckleshoot Indian Tribe	X	
Embrey Bronstad	Washington State University (WSU)		X
Georgine Yorgey	Washington State University (WSU)	X	X
Gwen Vernon	KC Conservation District	X	
Hans Van Dusen	City of Seattle (SPU)		X
Jeanette Brizendine	City of Federal Way	X	
Jenna McInnis	City of Kirkland	X	X
Joan Nelson	City of Auburn	X	X
John MacGillivray	City of Kirkland	X	X
Jon Greninger `	Snohomish County Solid Waste	X	X
Katie Kennedy	City of Seattle (SPU)	X	X
Keith Johnston	Tacoma-Pierce County Public Health	X	X
Kelsie Blanthorn	Seattle Housing Authority	X	X

Mary Harrington	Department of Ecology	X	X
Mason Giem	City of SeaTac	X	X
Pat Kaufman	City of Seattle (SPU)	X	X
Rick Hess	Puget Sound Clean Air	X	X
Ryan Dicks	Pierce County Solid Waste	X	X
Sabrina Combs	City of Bothell	X	X
Sally Brown	University of Washington (UW)		X
Sego Jackson	City of Seattle (SPU)	X	X
Stephanie Schwenger	City of Bellevue		X
Susan Fife-Ferris	City of Seattle (SPU)	X	X
Haulers			
Audrey Taber	Recology Cleanscapes	X	X
Carla Johnson	Republic Services	X	X
Hannah Scholes	Waste Management	X	X
Kevin Kelly	Recology Cleanscapes	X	
Matt Stern	Waste Management	X	
Nick Harbert	Waste Management	X	X
Composters and Composter Technology			
Andrew Tomes	WISErg	X	X
Bart Lynam	ReNuFuel	X	X
Bob Sargent	Rainier Wood Recyclers	X	
Craig Husa	Impact Bioenergy		X
Edward Wheeler	Lenz Enterprises	X	
Janusz Bajsarowicz	Pacific Topsoils	X	
Jason Lenz	Lenz Enterprises	X	
Jay Blazey	Cedar Grove	X	X
Joe Woods	Cedar Grove	X	X
Karen Dawson	Cedar Grove	X	X
Mollie Bogardus	Aveterra	X	X
Srirup Kumar	Impact Bioenergy	X	X
Stephan Banchero	Cedar Grove		X
Buyers and Users			
Barry Febos	21 Acres Farms	X	

Forrest Jammer	Thomas Rengstorf & Associates, Inc.	X	X
Advocacy and Community Organizations			
Cassie Whitebread	Tilth Alliance	X	
Gib Dammann	Zero Waste Vashon	X	X
Susan Thoman	Compost Manufacturing Alliance		X
Consultants			
Amanda Godwin	C+C		X
Andrea Lai	Cascadia Consulting	X	X
Francesca Davidson	C+C	X	X
Heather Levy	Cascadia Consulting	X	X
Julie Colehour	C+C (Facilitator)	X	X
Nathan Yale	C+C	X	X