

Re+ Fast Start Action Overview

Statewide Organics Legislation and Implementation

Description

In 2021, the Washington State Organics Policy Workgroup was formed to develop policies to improve organic material management. As a result, a comprehensive organic material management bill, HB 1799, was passed during the 2022 Washington state legislative session and signed into law by Governor Jay Inslee. The new law, the Organics Management Law, advances policies and resources for food recovery and donation, increases access to food and yard waste collection, and bolsters end markets for compost.

King County will coordinate and support other entities through the implementation of this law, and participate in efforts to pass additional policies that support improvements to organic material management.

Background

Policies proposed by the workgroup that informed the Organics Management Law target both food and other organic waste. Based on the 2019 Waste Characterization Study, 23.7% (or 206,450 tons annually) of what currently goes to the Cedar Hills Regional Landfill is organic material (food and yard waste). Food and yard waste have significant environmental and economic value when properly processed. Furthermore, a significant amount of food that ends up in the landfill is edible and could have been redistributed to people facing food insecurity. Instead, it was put in the garbage with the potential to emit 60,400 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (MTCO_{2e}) into the atmosphere, further contributing to climate change.¹

Benefits (of the Organics Management Law)

- Diversion potential: approximately 110,000 tons per year within King County.
- Greenhouse gas reduction: 67,500 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent or 13,000 gas-powered cars driven for a year.
- Jobs generated: potentially 180 jobs.
- Increased food donation and support for hunger relief organizations.
- Increased production of compost, a valuable soil amendment.





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Considerations (of Organics Management Law)

- Compost processing capacity
 - In 2021, regional compost processing was at about 80% capacity and will not be sufficient to meet diversion needs to meet the goals laid out in Re+.
- Costs
 - Increased collection costs for residents and businesses who are not currently participating in curbside organics collection.
 - These costs could be offset by reducing garbage collection.
- Changes in policy
 - Ensure access to compost collection services.
 - Require businesses to manage organic waste.
- Behavior changes
 - Customers or workers at businesses need to separate their food waste from garbage.

Equity and Social Justice Considerations

- Strengthening food donation improves hunger relief organizations' ability to feed more people facing food insecurity.
- Cost impacts and affordability of services for businesses that must begin to manage their organic materials under the law.
- Increased access to organics collection services.

Next Steps

Implementing the Organics Management Law

- Compost Procurement Ordinance
 - By January 1, 2023, King County will adopt an ordinance that supports end markets for compost and provides education about compost's benefits to King County residents.
 - King County provided a model ordinance that cities can adapt to meet the requirements in the Organics Management Law.
- Preparing for new regulations for commercial organics



- Businesses will be required to arrange for organics management services, starting with the largest food waste generators in 2024. King County is analyzing strategies to support businesses in this change. Programming, which likely includes technical assistance, will begin in 2023.
- Additional statewide organics policies
 - Participate in the continuation of the Washington State Organics Policy Workgroup's efforts

Questions?

Email
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¹ Methane, the primary greenhouse gas released from food waste, is captured at Cedar Hills Regional Landfill in partnership with Bio Energy Washington (BEW). BEW converts methane into a pipeline quality natural gas and sells it to Puget Sound Energy.

