VOTE TO BUILD A COMPOSTING ECONOMY TO REDUCE WASTE AND FIGHT CLIMATE CHANGE IN COLORADO

RECYCLE COLORADO

Support HB20-1047:
Develop a Statewide Organics Management Plan to Promote Compost Use

Sponsors: Representatives Lisa Cutter and Megan Froelich and Senator Kevin Priola

THE PROBLEM

Composting is a needed tool to fight climate change, reduce waste, improve soil health, conserve water and create local jobs—yet Colorado lacks needed infrastructure, markets and incentives to promote its use.

Colorado recycles and composts only 17% of its waste. This is far less than the national average of 35% and below our state goal of 28% by 2021.[i]

We are missing a big opportunity to fight climate change and increase resiliency in our state. 37% of Colorado's trash that is going to the landfill is organic material such as food scraps and yard waste that could be composted.[ii] Landfilling organic material results in the production of methane gas, a greenhouse gas that traps 84 times more heat in our atmosphere than carbon dioxide in the short term.[iii] Landfills are the third largest source of methane emissions in the U.S. However, when this organic material is composted and applied to soils instead, it transforms from being a major source of greenhouse gases to one of our best tools for fighting climate change. Plants and healthy soils enriched by compost help draw down excess CO_2 from the atmosphere and store it long-term in the soil, with soils able to store three times more carbon than plants.[iv] Additionally, compost can dramatically increase soils' water-holding capacity, making Colorado landscapes more resilient to drought [vii].

*Recoverables includes non-single stream items that can be recycled at designated facilities (eg. electronics, textiles, paint, batteries).

We are losing soil faster than it can regenerate. Overall, 28% of U.S. cropland is losing soil faster than it is being rebuilt.[v] Colorado soils are high in clay and applying compost can help aid the movement of air and water through soils, return valuable organic material to the soil, and conserve water. Additionally, compost reduces the need for synthetic pesticides and fertilizers.

Colorado is missing out on green jobs and economic benefits. Producing and using compost sustains five times more jobs than landfilling yard debris and food waste.[vi] In fact, nationwide, for every 1 million tons of food scraps and yard trimmings converted into compost and used locally, composting can create 1,400 new jobs.[viii] Rural communities in Colorado struggle to increase their waste diversion rates because they are so far away from processing facilities and markets. Compost is something that can be produced locally in rural communities and therefore not only provide local economic benefits but increase waste diversion.

Colorado lacks important infrastructure, markets and incentives to promote the use of compost. Only 16 Colorado counties have commercial composting facilities that accept food scraps and yard debris for composting.[viiii] To fix this lack, we need to know how much feedstock of organic waste (i.e., food waste and yard debris, biosolids, dairy and feedlot manure, and forest waste) is available in the state so composters can develop the needed infrastructure to process this organic material. Additionally, while landscaping markets for compost exist in urban centers, farmers need more accessible and affordable compost to use in building soil and growing more nutritious food.

THE SOLUTION: Invest in compost infrastructure and create a stronger market demand for finished compost.

Colorado needs more compost infrastructure throughout the state to cost-effectively and efficiently turn organic waste into nutrient-rich soil amendments.

Stronger market demand for finished compost will help manufacturers invest in new equipment and facilities to increase the recovery of organic waste throughout Colorado.

Incentives will encourage the use of compost on Colorado soils to build healthier and more resilient soils that also store more carbon, thereby reducing carbon in the atmosphere.

PLEASE SUPPORT HB20-1047:
DEVELOP A STATEWIDE MANAGEMENT PLAN TO PROMOTE COMPOST USE

This bill would:

1. Task the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment and the Department of Agriculture to conduct a study to quantify: existing organic waste feedstocks; capacity of existing organic waste generating and compost processing facilities; existing and potential end markets for compost; and potential incentives to encourage greater use of compost, especially for carbon storage on agricultural lands. This study will also analyze the climate change impacts of new compost infrastructure and utilization, and include a cost-benefit analysis and different mechanisms to increase and promote infrastructure expansion.

2. Task the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment and the Department of Agriculture to develop an organics waste management plan by September 1, 2022. The plan will include: 1) recommendations to increase the capacity of compost infrastructure, end-market demand and utilization of compost; 2) innovative ways to create financial incentives to encourage the voluntary use of compost in agriculture to promote carbon storage in soils; 3) a state procurement standard for the use of certified compost in state-funded projects; and 4) recommended strategies for local governments and commercial entities to reduce contamination in organic waste collected for compost.

3. Require the departments to submit a report summarizing the plan to the legislature by February 1, 2023

[i] Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, 2019. 2018 Waste Composition of Municipal Solid Waste Disposal. https://environmentalrecords.colorado.gov/HPRMWebDrawerHM/RecordView/420851.

[ii] Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, 2019. 2018 Waste Composition of Municipal Solid Waste Disposal. https://environmentalrecords.colorado.gov/HPRMWebDrawerHM/RecordView/420851.

[iii] IPCC AR5 WGI Chapter 8, Table 8.7; https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/02/WG1AR5_Chapter08_FINAL.pdf

[iv] https://www.nature.com/scitable/knowledge/library/soil-carbon-storage-84223790/

[v] https://ilsr.org/state-of-composting/

[vi] https://ilsr.org/composting-sense-tables/

[vii]https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/compost_increases_the_water_holding_capacity_of_droughty_soils

[viii] https://ilsr.org/state-of-composting/

[viiii] https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdphe/composting

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