

Reducing Food Waste in Washington State

**Why Composters Should Support
Food Waste Prevention Planning:**

70.95.815 RCW

WA HB 1114 = 70.95.815 RCW

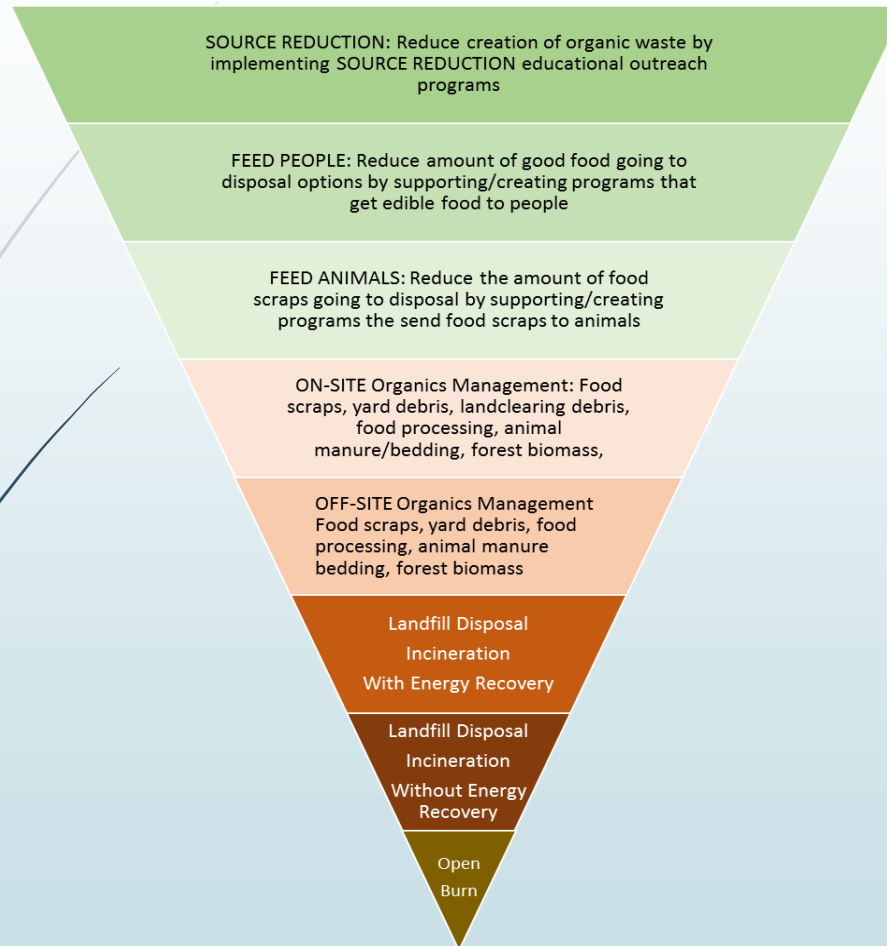
- ▶ The new law puts WA in-step with global (UN), federal (EPA,USDA), and regional (PCC) initiatives: to **develop a plan to reduce food waste generated annually by 50% by 2030**;
- ▶ Authorizes Ecology to use 2015 numbers as the baseline;
- ▶ Recognizes environmental benefits of reducing food waste;
- ▶ The new law requires that the plan include strategies to:
 - ▶ prevent and reduce the wasting of edible food by residents and businesses;
 - ▶ Help match edible food donation with food banks; and
 - ▶ **support productive uses for inedible food.**

70.95.815 RCW Planning Process

- ▶ Put the focus on Prevention, Rescue, and Recovery of food in that order
- ▶ Put Ecology in charge of the planning process
- ▶ Requires that Ecology, DOH, WSDA, OSPI, and stakeholders work together to develop the plan with FWP recommendations.
 - *Commerce must contract for an independent evaluation of the states wasted food and food waste management systems*
- **Food Waste Prevention Plan** due to legislature by October 1, 2020



Food Waste Prevention is #1



- Source Reduction / Prevention is first on the hierarchy and the Food Waste Prevention Plan:
 - > Reduce the amount of food **generated**
- Then rescue edible food
- Then beneficially manage inedible food
- Hopefully, way less food will be sent to landfills

Too Much of a Good Thing

- ▶ The 2015/16 WCS estimates **779,555 tons** of food were disposed in 2016 (16% of total waste stream).
 - ▶ ***What if all this food was diverted to composters???***
- ▶ Even if the **374,490 tons of edible food waste** was diverted to Food Rescue organizations....
- ▶ ... we'd still have approximately 405,065 tons of inedible food to manage.

What if We Skip Prevention?

- ▶ 405,065 tons of food would fill over 8,100 rail cars – making a train over 77 miles long.
- ▶ According to reports from compost facilities, approximately 289,520 tons of food were composted in in 2015.
- ▶ WA does not have the capacity to manage an additional 405,065 tons of food.
- ▶ And it's getting harder every day to
 - ▶ Site new facilities
 - ▶ Expand existing facilities



Composters Love and Hate Food

- ▶ Food can be heavy so can improve tipping revenue.
- ▶ Food brings a good source of nitrogen.
- ▶ The added moisture in food can be beneficial to the composting process.

Even so - we can admit it – food is problematic!

- ▶ Food is often cited as the cause of odor complaints.
- ▶ Food brings a lot of contamination with it.
- ▶ Too much food can mean too much nitrogen in the mix.
- ▶ Too much food can add to the leachate that must be managed.
- ▶ Food may cause an increase in unwanted air emissions.

Composters and Plan Requirements

The Food Waste Prevention Plan will

- ▶ recommend **a stable funding environment for** wasted food reduction and **food waste management systems;**
- ▶ provide state technical support to wasted food prevention and rescue and **food waste recovery organizations;**
- ▶ support productive uses of inedible food materials
- ▶ support the development of K-12 food waste reduction and recycling materials; and
- ▶ include food waste reduction and recycling BMP suggestions for use in local SWM Plans.

Why Support Food Waste Prevention?

- ▶ First and foremost, it's good for the planet!
- ▶ Second, it's better to feed edible food to people, not to compost facilities
- ▶ All composters know, it is possible to have too much of good thing.
- ▶ Composting is the efficient use of organic materials to improve soils, **but**
- ▶ Compost facilities are often viewed as easy dumping targets.
- ▶ Food waste prevention is even more efficient, reducing the need to find a 'disposal' site for all that food.
- ▶ Less food =
 - ▶ Less contamination
 - ▶ Reduced leachate
 - ▶ Reduced emissions.





Where do Composters Fit in the Food Waste Prevention Picture?

- ▶ Support local educational outreach;
 - ▶ Partner with local governments to teach backyard composting
- ▶ Support local solid waste staff or non-profits working to secure grant funds;
- ▶ Be active participants in Solid Waste Plan development;

- ▶ ***What else?***



Thank you!

Mary Harrington
Washington State Department of Ecology

mary.harrington@ecy.wa.gov

360-407-6915