

# Food Collection and Conversion

## Subject Matter Expert Group Meeting

Notes for November 27, 2019

### In Attendance:

- Mary Harrington – Ecology facilitator
- Dan Corum – City of Tacoma – food waste reduction and management
- Mike Myers – Retired wastewater treatment facility operator and host of the “Trash Talk” radio show out of Aberdeen ((1450 on the AM dial and 100.5 on the FM dial) currently focused on food waste issues.
- Austin Gast – Food safety and quality for CMI Orchards in Central WA
- Heather Trim – Zero Waste WA
- Kamal Patel – Area designer with a focus on the circular economy
- Kris Major – Education and outreach for the City of Spokane and Spokane Co Solid Waste Departments
- Peter Moulton – WA Dept of Commerce – state bioenergy coordinator
- Bob Zak – Works with organizations to improve efficiency – focused on food right now
- Srirup Kumar – Impact Bioenergy
- Troy Lautenbach – Lautenbach Recycling
- Jay Blazey – Cedar Grove

### Discussion

1. Introductions
2. A reminder was made to keep the ECY grant program in mind as we develop recommendations.
3. Discussion and recommendations were made regarding anaerobic digesters (AD):
  - a. Another consideration: the state anaerobic digester (AD) projects with emphasis on how federal reimbursement for recycled natural gas (RNG) is lower when the gas is made from food as opposed to manure, so AD’s are less interested in making RNG from food debris.
  - b. The Vashon Island project that uses Impact Bioenergy’s AD’s to manage residuals from a tofu producer.
  - c. Lautenbach Recycling collects inedible food from Long View up to Bellingham, from food processing lines and bring that to AD’s around the state.
4. A review was done on Ecology’s supporting resources: web page, Sharepoint page, and Jade Monroe was introduced.
  - a. The group was informed that the final plan will have participants affiliation listed, but not individual names.
  - b. The public comment period on the plan was highlighted. Opens December 3 and goes until May 2020.

5. The group discussed metrics that will be used to connote success making sure that all costs (economic as well as environmental and social) are accounted for.
  - a. We were initially talking about just the pounds diverted, because that's basically the only metric that the legislation required, but we are also very interested in having more information about potential greenhouse gas impacts, social impacts, and other environmental impacts.
  - b. One of the criteria that a grocer uses is counting meals created, and Thurston Co Food Bank has been making efforts to measure by meals created so we have some examples to examine.
  - c. It is worth looking at similar systems for measurement best practices, like energy systems.
6. Potential recommendations were discussed.
  - a. Waste water treatment plants with AD may be an option for converting food waste into energy or gas.
    - i. We talked previously about the transportation logistics with regard to collecting and taking food residuals to waste water treatment facilities.
    - ii. A 2000 report was mentioned that listed 47 municipal treatment plants with anaerobic digesters in Washington State (at the time) so that number may have changed since 2000. Many WWTP's don't want the food since it will increase the amount of biosolids that must be managed at the end.
      1. Notable case studies:
        - a. Eastbay Mud in Alameda County, California, is a very large treatment plant that services the East side of the Bay Area and some ten years ago when California passed a state law banning all solid waste by the year 2030. The City of San Francisco was the first to respond by banning all food waste in the solid waste stream.
        - b. A lot can be learned from how Portland metro area has been wrestling with this issue of additional organic waste streams into waste water treatment because they've certainly been working on that quite a bit over the last decade and give us a lot of insights. And just for a point of reference there are about 300 wastewater treatment plants in the state and about 65 of those have digesters.
        - c. The digester in Fremont, Michigan was brought up for food processing waste for the local community, so that's another model. That one works. That one's really good.
7. Challenges within the collection and conversion sector were discussed:
  - a. Incentives and odor were discussed as challenges.
  - b. There can be siloed solutions for unique issues.
    - i. For example: Processors are trying to figure it out for themselves. There's not a collective they can go to. Also there is contamination and the opportunity to create efficiencies within the markets.

8. What actions that will be most beneficial to improve conversion of food into compost energy and fuel?
  - a. WA has particular issues with regard to the barriers with regard to energy, costs, transportation network isn't the most wonderful for getting, for moving edible food that's for sure, but when it comes to sending it to for conversion to soil amendments, energy or fuel, can you guys think of any barriers?
  - b. There are just 8 on-farm digesters and there is a 9th under construction in Washington.
  - c. There are potentially 8 or 9 revenue streams off an anaerobic digester, depending on what your feed stocks are, what your off-takes are, you know, how mature are your markets, and transportation issues.
9. What barriers, opportunities and benefits are realized by land application of food processing debris?
  - a. The biggest barrier is contamination. Composting facilities can't handle a lot of trash in the organic waste that comes to them.
  - b. A comment was made about how we need to understand the intersection between all these regulations and where they are bumping up against each other, or conflicting with each other.
10. What are the pathways by which food gets to feeding animals?
  - a. New regulations, markets, and what is being produced.
  - b. Those are both becoming challenged because of the new regulations. The pet food ones are going to guarantee they're going to test upon receiving for pathogens. If they're a big pet food company, they're going to have a food safety plan that's required by the regulation, and they're going to test on receipt for pathogens and do a reject or accept.
11. What do we do to reduce contamination and collected food?
  - a. Need improved packaging and better education.
  - b. Consumer misinformation on what is compostable and what truly is not.
  - c. Each county and jurisdiction have different capacities and requirements.
12. A discussion was had on larger sustainability principles:
  - a. A closed-loop economy is needed.
  - b. Contamination and cost of landfilling plastics and packaging.