



OCWR's World-Class Organic Waste Management Infrastructure Category: Environment & Natural Resources

SUMMARY OVERVIEW

OCWR has met the unprecedented challenge of developing a regional organic waste management program for the County of Orange, in response to the lack of recycling infrastructure to process organic materials.

CHALLENGE

The County of Orange and its cities are challenged to comply with environmental legislation for which there is no infrastructure. California leads the nation in creating legislation designed to protect the environment for citizens. However, complying with these regulations can create challenges for local jurisdictions. Two recent laws in particular are transforming California's solid waste system: AB 1594 and SB 1383. Orange County is the largest user of greenwaste material as an Alternative Daily Cover (ADC) in California. Prior to 2020, OCWR accepted residential greenwaste, also known as Processed Green Material (PGM), from OC cities at no cost. OCWR used PGM to cover buried waste, to control vectors, odor and litter.

Under an earlier bill, AB 939, OC cities receive state recycling diversion credits as well as reduced costs on the handling of greenwaste material. However, per AB 1594 and effective January 1, 2020, PGM used as ADC was no longer eligible for diversion credits. Furthermore, SB 1383, approved in 2016, mandates a statewide 75 percent reduction of organic waste disposal by 2025. The combination of these two bills creates a demand for organic recycling that is not yet supported by sufficient infrastructure within OC. Without that local infrastructure, the costs for handling greenwaste material will increase significantly for OC residents and businesses due to challenges in siting new facilities in an urban setting. SB 1383 requires reduction in methane emissions, including emissions created by decomposing greenwaste in landfills, essentially transforming the industry that for decades buried organic waste.

SOLUTION

OCWR created a three-site, commercial-scale composting program as a regional response to industry-transforming legislation. The first facility is operational at one of OCWR's three landfill sites. The second will open in Fall 2021; it has been constructed and is awaiting final permits. The third will launch in 2022.



Collectively, these sites can provide the infrastructure to help the County and its cities to support the State's goal of recycling organic materials that can be repurposed for beneficial reuse.

INNOVATION

This program demonstrates the leadership role Orange County has taken to develop a regional program that can benefit multiple jurisdictions. A regional program supports cities that are not able to develop their own facilities due to space constraints, regulatory permitting, capital costs, and zoning. Orange County's organics program builds upon OCWR's resources and leadership in the waste management industry by utilizing the existing landfills to manage and process the organics material.

RESULTS

Bee Canyon Greenery is nearly one year into its operations, and the facility enjoys a steady flow of greenwaste for processing. Measurements of the data indicates the greenwaste has fully composted and is ready to be processed for beneficial usage. As the batches of compost is being produced, OCWR is working with County agencies and cities to find uses for the finished product.

REPLICABILITY

The regional infrastructure developed by the County of Orange provides a template for other counties to meet the State's objective of increased recycling and the fight against climate change. Achieving the State's goals falls on all jurisdictions. However, a coordinated approach has to be taken within each County to lead the efforts of its member cities. The County of Orange recognized the potential leadership role and began the process prior to the implementation of the SB 1383 regulations. The County has been recognized by the State as a model for other jurisdictions to follow.

PROJECT OR PROGRAM CONTACT

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ADDITIONAL MATERIALS

<https://oclandfills.com/page-unsearchable/regional-organics-infrastructure-building-world-class-organic-facilities>