



Title: Composting Home for The Penn State Organic Materials Processing and Education Center

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Organization: The Pennsylvania State University

State: PA **Region:** Mid-Atlantic

Year of Funding:

Theme: Animal Waste Management

Situation: A campus wide composting program (food waste, landscape debris and farm waste) needed enhanced facilities for windrow composting. A hay field was identified for a new site but development funds were not available. A highway contractor needed a site for a temporary concrete batch plant. The contractor graded a 6 acre pad area and established water and electric service to the site as part of his use. The site is now being modified for the Organic Materials Processing and Education Center OMPEC).

Objectives: 1) Operate a commercial scale composting facility that will provide for removal of organic wastes products from the university waste stream and conversion into useful resources. 2) Use this facility to enhance campus and statewide teaching, extension and research programs and experiences of the university. 3) Design, construct and operate the site to set a good example and be a good neighbor.

Methods: The operational side of the project produces compost for landscaping, teaching and research use. Communication with the university community is maintained by signage at points of disposal of wastes and use of compost, brochures, compost meals, tours, video tape, press releases and a web sight. Email distribution of agendas and discussions at monthly advisory committee meetings keeps university, extension staff, and other interested parties around the state aware of the program.

Partnerships: Housing and Food Services, Hospitality Services, Office of Physical Plant and the College of Agricultural Sciences have cooperated to make this project work. Faculty, extension staff, government and private industry form an advisory committee.

Research: Enhancement of the teaching extension and research mission of the university is a stated goal of this project. A faculty member is co-chair of project executive committee. Faculty and extension professionals participate in the advisory committee. UG classes use the project as a field trip and laboratory stop. Engineering design course uses site information for senior projects. Project has hosted the field portion of a statewide food composting certification course by PROP.

Resources: Tipping fees, product charges and modest contributions from partners provide operating expenses. Approximately \$250,000 of site development was acquired by partnering with concrete batch plant operator. Compost equipment grant, \$50,000.

Results: Educators and researchers have an operating commercial scale composting facility for use in teaching, outreach and research activities, 2.25 tons of food waste per day is diverted from landfill or sewage treatment plant disposal, 600 tons of compost is produced annually for use in campus landscaping, research and demonstrations. Two PhD projects are in process. Small and large group tours are accommodated on a request basis. An environmental course for high school students is in place.



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