



December 5, 2014

Mr. Ken Decio
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Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery
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Dear Mr. Decio:

Re. CalRecycle Draft Regulatory Revisions to Title 14 and 27 Regarding Compostable Materials Handling and Transfer/Processing

Dear Ken:

Sonoma Compost has been in business since 1985 and has composted clean green materials since 1993. To date we have processed and successfully marketed over 1,600,000 tons of organics. We appreciate the opportunity to comment on CalRecycle's proposed Title 14 and 27 revisions regarding Compostable Materials Handling and Transfer/Processing Regulations. We commend and support CalRecycle in its efforts to update the existing regulations regarding compostable materials and transfer/processing facilities in order to address the changing nature of organic waste handling throughout California, as well as safely enable the needed growth in diversion of this waste stream to meet the 75% Initiative, Strategic Directive 6.1, and other sustainability goals of the state.

Sonoma Compost looks forward to improvements to the proposed regulations which will foster continued industry growth, provide a level playing field with competitive operations, and set standards that are reachable, yet still provide reasonable protection of the public health, safety, and the environment. As a responsible, permitted compost facility we have concerns about inconsistent enforcement of current regulations, which has often put us at a competitive disadvantage. Given the expectation of tremendous

industry investment to meet the imminent policy mandates to be implemented over the next few years, we are hopeful that enhanced enforcement mechanisms can be developed and employed that will keep the composting industry thriving and make our efforts worthwhile.

We believe that the currently-proposed physical contamination limits are unjustified, unachievable (given current and foreseeable compost market conditions and available technology), and will cause significant harm to the financial health of composters statewide. These limits will be stifling industry growth at one of the more critical points in compost history, when multiple policy directives point to approximately 10 million tons of organics being removed from landfills over the next decade. This is organic material that is likely to take years of concerted outreach, education, and processing and technology improvements to clean up. This diversion of additional organics will tremendously increase the demands on organics processing and composting companies to provide service.

While we would prefer that CalRecycle continue to allow market forces to dictate the level of physical contaminants, we are supportive of a phased-in standard that allows time for jurisdictions and operators to adjust to the significant potential cost increases you have projected in your economic analysis. Specifically, while we agree that a 0.1% limit on physical contaminants may be achievable for green material, we do not believe that a limit below 0.5% can be met consistently, particularly given the increasing levels of food waste that are, and will be, used as feedstock.

While direct land application of organics with a .1% contaminant may seem appropriate, it is remarkable that that same material would not be marketable anymore when processed more responsibly at a compost facility where the feedstock will shrink approximately 50% and the operator would now be left with a compost that could now have a .2% contaminant rate. Furthermore, while compost is agronomically applied 1/30 – 1/6 of an inch (equivalent to 2-10 tons per acre), agronomic rates for direct land application have been 1-2 feet, up to 720 times as high. Explicitly, this means that up to 720 times the volume of contaminants may be applied to the field in one such application.

We are fully supportive of the current language related to land application, with some clarification. Land application continues to undermine potential feedstock sources for the organics processing industry, while increasing the potential for spreading pathogens, physical contamination, and invasive pests throughout the state.

Our company has a long-standing commitment to composting and organics recycling. The environmental benefits of compost are well-known and wide ranging with respect to soil health, water quality and quantity, and greenhouse gas reductions. We look forward to the adoption of sensible regulations that will allow our company to continue providing these beneficial services to our client jurisdictions and their constituents. We

support the structure that is proposed by the California Compost Coalition whereby in 2020 clean green facilities will meet the .1% and mixed materials .5% contaminant limits. Note that Caltrans just adopted a .5% contaminant spec for their materials, which would create uniformity amongst agencies.

Not currently earmarked for revision is the 1% contamination limit for clean green facilities. In order to maximize diversion of organics in the State we recommend that this will be revised to read 1% after contaminant removal processes at the compost facility before the material is being processed (ground).

Thank you for allowing us to weigh in on these critical regulations.

Sincerely,



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