

**Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation**

Waste Management & Prevention Division, Solid Waste Program

One National Life Drive, Davis 1 802-828-1138

Montpelier, VT 05620-3520 [VTrecycles.com](https://dec.vermont.gov/waste-management/solid)

Main Group Participants as Outlined in Act 170:

Michael Casella Casella Waste Systems

Steven Cash Vermont Department of Agriculture, Food & Markets

Billy Connelly Vanguard Renewables

Jenna Evans Ben and Jerry’s

Tom Gilbert Black Dirt Farm

Dan Goossen Green Mountain Compost

Erin Sigrist VT Retailers and Grocers Association

Other Group Participants:

Christine Beling EPA

Craig Coker Coker Composting and Consulting

Nick D’Agostino Vermont Compost Company

Natasha Duarte Compost Association of Vermont

Caroline Gordon Rural VT and Protect Our Soils

Sarah Lillibridge Lamoille Solid Waste Mgmt. District

Heather Shouldice Shouldice and Associates

 Cheri L’Esperance

Mark Shea Rutland County Solid Waste District

ANR Participants:

Ben Gauthier VT ANR – Solid Waste Management Program

Josh Kelly VT ANR – Solid Waste Management Program

Mia Roethlein VT ANR – Solid Waste Management Program

 Dennis Fekert VT ANR – Solid Waste Management Program

**Main Topics:** Food Recovery Management Hierarchy & Source Separation

“*(1) recommendations on whether the organics management hierarchy in 10 V.S.A. § 6605k should apply to each generator of organic waste.*

*(2) whether the Agency of Natural Resources should modify its existing policy surrounding the source separation of organic wastes;”*

Josh Kelly offered a recap from the last meeting. There was some discussion on the food recovery hierarchy and what each priority was. ANR showed the infographic of the hierarchy via the [food donation website page](https://dec.vermont.gov/waste-management/solid/materials-mgmt/food-donation).

Erin Sigrist and Jenna Evans spoke to hierarchy application and their experience with food scrap collection and management.

Erin represents retailers who are wondering why VT has its own hierarchy and doesn’t just refer to EPA’s.

UVM study showing that food scraps going to a digester via depackaging are not necessarily any more contaminated with microplastics than source separated food scraps going for composting.

Erin expressed a need to consider anaerobic digestion more than just composting.

Erin would like to have a retailer with direct experience in food scrap management come in to talk to this group.

Ben informed group that Brent Demers from City Market tentatively scheduled for 11/30

Erin suggested that a company that creates de-packaging technology might be good to invite and show what improvements have been made and what data shows.

Mike Casella suggested a representative from Scott’s Turbo Separator.

Erin offered to invite Hannaford’s to speak at the next meeting.

Jenna offered that Ben and Jerry’s wants to keep the hierarchy as a recommendation.

Ben and Jerry’s has a policy in place that harmonizes all Unilever production to divert from landfill.

Tom Gilbert offered background on how the food recovery hierarchy was chosen for VT and the main difference from EPA’s hierarchy is that anaerobic digestion and composting are equivalent and that one does not outrank the other.

Josh reviewed ANR’s hierarchy support ideas. The group discussed options for supporting the hierarchy and possible complications in operations and logistics when applying some of the ideas.

There was discussion on the definition of generator and clarification that a generator would not have to follow the hierarchy multiple times but would follow the natural progression of attempting the highest use possible and then down the priority list for management of food scraps.

There was also a discussion regarding that while the hierarchy could apply to all, the compliance focus should be on larger generators possibly those who produce 1 ton or more of food scraps.

Also, clarification was offered that the hierarchy applies to the generator and not the depackaging facility.

Billy offered that cost is one consideration but also value is a consideration, i.e. Certified B corp is required to improve their score over time but value could be higher by getting a lower GHG score.

In addition to cost and value, Ben suggested considering environmental and environmental justice impacts of our material management system, such as organics being distributed long distances to potentially disadvantaged individuals/communities.

It was mentioned that the distance and impacts of driving (GHGs and cost), food scraps going to an out of state digester and food going far away unnecessarily, need to be evaluated.

Billy suggested that the group needs to consider the burden on the generators who have to separate the baked goods from the clamshell, wrap on the sandwich, and is that even possible. Do grocery stores have enough staff or space to do so?

Erin offered that grocery stores may not have enough space or staff to stand in line and unwrap the packaging.

Tom offered that the group should establish how they want materials to generally be handled and when it is an unreasonable bar to reach there should be options or exemptions for the generator.

It was noted that the hierarchy is working now as generators will look to donate any edible food first and then move to animal feed before going to either composting or digestion.

It was pointed out that food residuals going for animal feed are strictly regulated and Agency of Agriculture- Stephanie Smith- could speak to that directly. Steve Cash noted that there should be a focus on keeping plastics out of both source separated food scraps and food processing residuals in order to ensure maximum quality feed to maintain animal health.

The group discussed potential recommendations on the hierarchy and agreed to look at the draft hierarchy support ideas that ANR worked on and offer suggestions in a working document prior to the November 9th meeting. Participants agreed to establish a shared Google doc using ANR’s ideas as a starting framework and will begin to add the hierarchy statute at the top and then each Participant can go into the shared document and begin submitting their edits and ideas, which could become recommendations of the group to the Legislature.

The group agreed to invite up to 5 speakers to the next meeting and ask them to present for ~10 minutes each. Ben to line up speakers. Q & A and discussion will follow speakers at next meeting and a continued conversation on the hierarchy and source separation policy ideas.