

March 27, 2012 - April 10, 2012

In This Issue...

[On The Film, "Thrive"](#)

[Day Worker Center](#)

[Quarter-Cent Sales Tax in Capitola](#)

[GreenWaste Builds Its Organic Waste Recovery Program](#)

[Around Town](#)

[Art of Nature](#)

[Business Profile](#)

[House Painter David Juenemann](#)

[The Reopening of Om Gallery](#)

[Crimebeat](#)

[Read Here](#)

[Did You Know?](#)

[Geeks with Too Much Time on Their Hands](#)

[Elections 2012](#)

[Valley Women's Club to Hold Candidates' Forum](#)

[History](#)

[Capitola's Missing Beach](#)

[Newsbriefs](#)

[Friend of Agriculture](#)

[Opinions](#)

[Dangers of Distracted Driving](#)

Closing the Loop on Food Waste

GreenWaste Builds Its Organic Waste Recovery Program

By Michelle FH Simmons

Where does that food that doesn't get sold in stores or get left on plates in restaurants wind up? That's one of the questions GreenWaste Recovery, a garbage pickup provider, asked itself back in 2000.

The company had already been composting yard waste for five years but decided to broaden its efforts to include food scraps, according to Emily Hanson, the community relations manager at the company.

"The highest amount of all material that is landfilled that could be recycled is organic material," she said. "We had done a good job up to that point of keeping traditional recyclables—cans, bottles, paper—out of landfills, but we hadn't done a good job of getting organic material out of landfills."

Most food waste is thrown in the garbage can and winds up in landfills, Hanson said. Landfill operators bury the material they receive, which deprives the waste of oxygen. The end result is methane gas, which is 22 percent more harmful to the environment than carbon dioxide, Hanson explained.

Organic waste, she said, makes up about 35 percent of a community's overall waste production. To combat organic materials ending up in landfills, GreenWaste has been offering a pilot commercial food waste collection service to the city of Capitola, Scotts Valley and unincorporated Santa Cruz County since November of 2010.

The company picks up food waste that's been deposited in special bins and transports it to a facility to be composted. Food scraps like vegetables, poultry, rice, beans, cheese and coffee can all be collected for compost.

Food soiled paper, like coffee filters and plates, as well as table flowers and floral trimmings, are also accepted by the program.

Local Businesses Onboard

About 15 businesses in Capitola are currently signed up for the collection program at no additional cost to what they already pay for regular garbage pickup.

Green Waste provides businesses with yellow, rolling bins that help restaurant workers, food service employees and consumers know where to deposit leftover food.

"We produce so much food waste," said Gina Dekort, the store manager for New Leaf Community Market in Capitola. "It's good waste because it's a lot of organic produce from local farms.

Instead of it just filling up a landfill, they can use it to produce something good." Dekort said that the juice bar in her store as well as the food service counter produce a large amount of organic food waste, though she couldn't say exactly how much.

Her store has been participating in the program since the moment it was offered and was already pushing for a food collection program for quite some time.

"Businesses like New Leaf and Whole Foods, which also participate in the program, came to the table with a 'Why isn't this already happening?' attitude," Hanson said.

Dekort said it's empowering to be able to turn the organic trash her store produces into something of value. She said GreenWaste has supported New Leafs food recycling efforts every step of the way.

"Just the fact that they are doing it, they see that there is a value for everyone and they're not just looking at dollar signs and bottom lines," she said. "They are asking, 'How can we do things to make them work and benefit everyone?'"

Ted Burke, the owner of the Shadowbrook Restaurant, said that his business committed to taking part in the food recovery program over a year and a half ago because it fits in with his business's overall environmental policy. "It's consistent with how the restaurant operates," he said.

Burke said he's been impressed with GreenWaste's level of service, including providing extra pickup days during the holidays.

Everything that's left on a plate at the Shadowbrook Restaurant, from Potatoes au Gratin to steak gristle, winds up in the bins provided by GreenWaste. Kitchen scraps go into the bins, as well.

"The kind of food waste we have is very heavy because it has a lot of liquid in it," Burke said. "We had a concern that we would really need a lot of containers and that they would be difficult to transport."

GreenWaste not only provided Shadowbrook Restaurant with as many bins as they needed, they also put them on rollers and told them they could fill them up one third of the way so they wouldn't get too heavy, Burke said. Because the bins are yellow, they are easily distinguishable from regular recycling bins, too.

Closing the Loop

Hanson said that the collected food waste is taken to the Monterey Waste Management District, a composting facility in Marina. This facility recovers more than 95 percent of the material accepted, according to the District. The material is then composted and sold to various businesses, though the main market for this material is the landscaping sector, she said.

"We are taking discards, which are one of the hardest wastes to manage, and taking them and turning them into something cool," she said.

Although only between 15-20 percent of Capitola businesses are participating in the program so far, Hanson said that GreenWaste is pushing to get more businesses participating. They recently sent out a brochure that outlines the program to Capitola business with a food component.

At the moment, businesses can have their food waste recovered at no additional cost. If the program becomes a permanent fixture in the future, Hanson said GreenWaste will look at how much of the overall garbage volume food waste comprises and develop rate structures from there.

In addition to providing the bins and recovering the food waste, Hanson said that GreenWaste is trying to make the program as business-friendly as possible. The company is providing posters and other educational collateral to help employees and customers understand what constitutes compostable food waste.

Members of the company's outreach team have also been in contact with businesses to inform them of the costs and how the program operates, she said.

Burke said that GreenWaste's message has resounded with his employees. Not only has the restaurant been able to spread the message of composting outside of its dining room, Burke said that recycling food waste is saving space in the restaurant's dumpster.

New Leaf has also been able to cut its dumpsters from two to one. "I would recommend it for any business," Burke said. "If a busy organization like us can do it, a fairly small restaurant can do it too. It doesn't take up as much room as people might think it would and it doesn't impede food preparation."

[Editor's Note: GreenWaste's Material Recovery Facility was awarded the Acterra Business Environmental Award for Environmental Enterprise, one of the Bay Area's oldest and most prestigious environmental recognition programs, in 2011. The award is presented annually to leading businesses that make impactful contributions and deliver significant environmental benefits to the community. •