Sustaining the land, saving the landfill

COMMERCIAL FOOD WASTE BAN HELPS REGION ACHIEVE ENVIRONMENTAL GOALS

Three years ago businesses and institutions in the Regional District of Nanaimo changed the way they manage their food waste and other compostable organics.

In June 2005, the RDN banned commercial food waste from disposal in the Regional Landfill. Restaurants, grocery stores, and other organizations with food services were required to separate and send their food and other compostable wastes to the region’s licensed composting facility.

The food waste disposal ban applies to more than 650 businesses and organizations throughout the region. Most have successfully integrated food waste recycling into their operations and have substantially reduced the amount of garbage they send to the landfill. The RDN is now working to ensure everyone affected complies with the ban and prevents contaminating the organic waste they collect with plastics and metals.

Results to date and their impact

Compostable organics comprise 32% of commercial/ institutional waste and up to 50% of household waste. The RDN Zero Waste Plan has identified organics diversion as the primary means to reach the goal of diverting 75% of the region's solid waste away from the landfill by 2010.

Since 2005, participating businesses and organizations have diverted more than 11,000 tonnes of food waste and compostable organics to International Composting Corporation’s Duke Point facility.

“Your efforts have made a major contribution to our Zero Waste goal of eliminating garbage, reducing greenhouse gases and creating a more sustainable region,” says RDN Board Chairperson Joe Stanhope.

SITE VISITS HELP BUSINESSES WITH FOOD WASTE BAN

Businesses and organizations affected by the commercial food waste ban should watch their mail for a letter advising of upcoming visits from RDN Zero Waste Compliance Officer Maude Mackey. The purpose of the visits is to update information on commercial food waste generators in the region, review their waste management practices and ensure operations comply with regulations requiring the separation and collection of compostable organics.

Mackey recently visited the Shanghai City Restaurant at Brooks Landing in Nanaimo, which has been recycling its food waste since 2005.

“I reviewed what they are doing and provided them with some posters showing acceptable materials and the benefits of recycling organics,” Mackey said. “Overall I was very pleased with their efforts to ensure they divert all acceptable materials and maintain a clean working environment.”

Screened compost produced from commercial food waste at International Composting Corporation is used by landscapers and farmers.
Recycling food waste and other organic materials turns what once was garbage into a sustainable resource. Here are just some of the businesses and organizations that have integrated organics recycling into their operations:

**Coast Bastion Inn**

Since launching its organics recycling program three years ago, the Coast Bastion Inn has cut its garbage by more than 40% and undertaken a drive to reduce the hotel’s environmental footprint. Recycling food waste coincided with a host of environmental improvements at the 177-room hotel in downtown Nanaimo. Expanded recycling along with retrofits to improve energy efficiency and conserve water, has earned the Coast Bastion a three “Green Key Eco Rating” from the Hotel Association of Canada.

Food waste recycling has reduced the hotel’s garbage bill and enabled the removal of its garburator, saving water and maintenance costs. The program has benefited other areas of the business too.

“Our customers ask about our green initiatives when they book rooms or conferences,” says General Manager Thomas Mayrhofer. We see it as both a marketing tool and a way to attract new employees. People want to support and work for a company that shows it cares about the environment.”

**Quality Foods**

Preparation and planning was the key to Quality Foods’ success in integrating organics recycling programs at its six stores throughout the region.

“We were one of the first grocery store chains to do a pilot project,” says Derek Dewolf, who managed the program’s introduction. “We worked with International Composting Corporation to assess what could be composted and the volumes and then developed collection systems and training programs for our 450 employees.”

One of the main obstacles Quality Foods had to overcome was lack of space at its Qualicum Beach and Parksville locations. An innovative compactor design solved the problem, enabling collection of food waste and garbage in the same container and eliminating the need for separate pick-ups.

“Everything is working fine,” Dewolf says. “We’ve taken out 60% of the garbage that was going to the landfill and kept our costs about the same.”

**Nanaimo Regional General Hospital**

Caring for the environment is increasingly becoming linked with patient care at Nanaimo Regional General Hospital (NRGH).

The NRGH collects and recycles food and other compostable waste from the food preparation area that serves the hospital’s 406 patient beds and 255-seat cafeteria.

“We capture the waste from preparing the equivalent of 1,500 meals a day,” says Gail Kay, Manager of Food Services. “It’s made a big difference in the amount of waste that used to go on in our compactor.”

NRGH is looking to expand its food recycling program to include Dufferin Place, the hospital’s elder and extended care facility.

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**Thomas Mayrhofer, General Manager of the Coast Bastion Inn, shows food waste collected from the hotel’s catering operations.**

**Derek Dewolf, Quality Foods Merchandiser, developed an innovative split compactor for storing and transporting food waste.**

**Kitchen staff member Keith Roach scrapes food waste from tray line food container into a collection bin at Nanaimo Regional General Hospital.**
Your Participation is Making a Difference!

TIPS FOR REDUCING CONTAMINATION

- Train your staff to separate food waste from regular garbage.
- Remove all plastic or Styrofoam liners before putting fruit, vegetable or other food waste in collection bins.
- Substitute plastics wherever possible by replacing them with reusable cups, plates and containers, waxed paper, waxed condiment containers and wooden stir sticks.
- Put posters showing acceptable/unacceptable materials in organics collection areas. Contact the RDN or visit its website (details on back page) to obtain posters.
- Use colour coded containers to clearly identify which bins are for organics, recycling, and garbage.

Be a good sort!

KEEP CONTAMINANTS OUT OF THE COMPOSTABLE ORGANICS YOU COLLECT

The ongoing success of commercial composting means keeping garbage out of the organics that you send to International Composting Corporation (ICC).

Plastic bags, films, straws, creamers, Styrofoam food trays and metal foils and cans are common contaminants. Removing them at ICC requires additional screening so the final compost product meets regulations and customer requirements.

What happens if I send the wrong materials?

ICC will accept some contamination from non-organic materials but all businesses should work to eliminate them at the source. Waste haulers delivering contaminated loads will receive a violation notice detailing the unacceptable materials and photos illustrating the problems. Repeated violations can result in fines to the hauler, increased tipping fees or ICC rejecting an entire load if it exceeds a reasonable level of contamination. The hauler may in turn pass these costs on to its customers.

Use only “certified compostable” bags to line your collection bins

Food waste collection bin liner bags must meet specifications for commercial composting facilities. Using the wrong liner bags may contaminate your food waste and result in charges from your hauler.

Certified compostable liner bags are designed to break down in a composting facility with no visible or harmful residues.

Biodegradable plastic bags will eventually break down but are unacceptable because they can leave visible traces in the compost product.

Check before purchasing or ordering liner bags. The packaging should state “this plastic product meets ASTM 6400 or ASTM #D6400 Standard Specifications for Compostable Plastic and/or uses the “Compostable” logo from the Biodegradable Products Institute. Call ICC for a list of local suppliers.

TELL US HOW IT’S WORKING!

The RDN is asking participating businesses and organizations to complete a brief survey. Your participation and input will help us better assess and address your needs and concerns.

Options for completing and sending the survey:

1. Go to www.rdn.bc and click on the survey link under Environmental to quickly complete it on-line;

or

2. Complete the survey by hand and mail it to:

   RDN Solid Waste
   Department
   6300 Hammond Bay Rd.
   Nanaimo, BC V9T 6N2

   Deadline: Completed surveys must be received by December 15, 2008.
Acceptable Compostable Materials
- Food leftovers, plate scrapings
- Fruits and vegetables
- Meat, fish, poultry
- Bones
- Shellfish
- Soiled paper towels and napkins
- Used paper cups and plates
- Dairy products
- Milk and cream cartons
- Soiled waxed paper
- Waxed cardboard
- Bread, pasta, baked goods
- Food soiled cardboard and paper
- Tea bags, coffee grounds, filters
- Egg shells
- Wooden stir sticks
- Wooden chopsticks
- Cut and dried flowers

Not Acceptable for Composting
- ALL PLASTICS, including
  - Plastic bags and films
  - Plastic creamers and straws
  - Plastic bottles, food containers
  - Plastic utensils, plates
  - Plastic condiment packages
  - Plastic-coated cardboard cartons
  - Bread bag clips
  - Candy wrappers
  - Meat wrappers
  - Styrofoam trays/packaging
- ALL METALS, including
  - All metal lids
  - Tin foil, twist ties, nails
  - Paper clips, wire
  - Metal food trays
  - Metal hangers

MORE INFORMATION?
Resources and support for commercial food waste diversion are available:

On-line:
Point your Web browser to www.rdn.bc.ca, click on Zero Waste – Garbage and Recycling and follow the link to Commercial Food Waste Diversion under Zero Waste Programs.

Or contact the:
RDN Solid Waste Department
6300 Hammond Bay Rd., Nanaimo, BC V9T 6N2
Ph. 250-390-6560 (Nanaimo area) or 250-954-3792 (Parksville-Qualicum area)
Email: Envsrv@rdn.bc.ca

International Composting Corporation
981 Maughan Rd., Nanaimo, BC V9X 1J2
Ph. (250) 722-4614
www.internationalcomposting.com

* Posters are available for download at www.rdn.bc.ca

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