

Compost Working Group

Meeting Notes – March 26, 2014

ATTENDEES: Jim Leland (AAFM), Alex DePillis (AAFM), Dan Goossen (GMC), Pat Sagui (CAV), Wendy Sue Harper (CAV), Cathy Jamieson (DEC), Josh Kelly (DEC), Jake Claro (VSJF), Karl Hammer (VCC), Lisa Ransom (Grow), Robert Foster (VNAP), James McSweeney (HCC), anyone I missed?

NEXT STEPS:

- Josh ask UVM if monocot (such as oats) bioassay testing has occurred yet. ANSWER: No they have not.
- Dan to draft and circulate Persistent Herbicide Pamphlet for Horse Owners – DONE
- Dan and Josh talk with Cary G. about research needs and DOW
- Pat wants us to follow up with FPR on wood chip material for composting – Cathy to do this.
- Alex willing to talk with Josh about marketing assistance from VAAFM.

NOTES:

Dan G – Overview of CSWD work with DOW. Number of labs they lined up to do testing. None were able to do analysis within acceptable range. DOW's dip stick simple test is still on track to be available in 1-2 months.

UVM – Still doing bioassays—finding persistent herbicides in small quantities from various facilities.

CSWD – now blending finished compost with high carbon wood ash—high carbon wood ash at 0.5%-1% to no more than 5% by volume. Adding small amount (~3%) at outset of composting and the 5% to finished compost. Hired Woods End Labs to come up with a formula for blending.

Vermont Compost Co. is adding 2% on front end mixed with cow manure and bark mulch.

VNAP using 1% wood ash at front end.

Supply of high carbon wood ash coming from facility in NH (wood to energy plant). It is affordable!

Andrew Carpenter – Northern Tilth Maine is knowledgeable about use of carbon in soils

CSWD thinks carbon bonds herbicide for long-term based on info from DOW

High carbon wood ash in VT may be available not so in other places around country.

Generally the wood ash is working to inhibit the persistent herbicide.

Karl – Wants a monocot added to bioassay tests to show if impact is from persistent herbicide or something else.

Dan – Thinks DOW may be amenable to doing testing to provide assurance herbicides are not impacting plants

CSWD in contact with both DOW and DuPont.

Wendy Sue Harper – we should verify the high carbon will provide long term mitigation and not allow a release of herbicides in the future.

Dan – USCC is compiling a document of areas/facilities impacted by persistent herbicides and a way to anonymously report impacts to them.

Thinks herbicides to qualify for use should 1. Be able to test for and 2 breakdown over time.

Jim Leland – compostability will be a criteria for re-registration of these herbicides on federal level. May be a few years before we see this though.

Cow manure – not much concern of herbicide since the applicators regulated by AAFM won't use it and it is unlikely that farmers will order it online.

What should our “ask” of DOW be for testing, etc? OR should it be on high c wood ash mitigation?

Has anyone reached out to Cornell University? No one had.

Research needs that could be asked of DOW:

- Research on wood ash as a long term mitigation strategy.
- Degradation rate of herbicides
- Bioassays into the future

Task 1 – Pamphlet on persistent herbicides to Horse farmers.

Alex – Outreach should focus on Audience, Message, and Distribution.

Pat – someone should check in with UVM Ext.

Lisa – concern about urban community/public and market and their fear of persistent herbicides and compost.

Info to consumers of compost – could be more broad and include benefits of using compost

Outreach needs identified by group:

- Targeted outreach to horse farmers
- Targeted outreach to users of compost – e.g. compost is safe/good.

Composters could distribute the pamphlet to their horse farmers they collect from and it would have a unified message.

Sales Tax and Compost update from Pat

Senate Ag.

- Looking at the retroactive part
- They want assurance Tax Dept. won't pursue past tax due (although will not refund those who paid)

Other issues

Pat will send out a list of gaps from asset mapping project

Pat – storm water rules – revision will require soil amendment. ANR can check on this.

Lisa – thinks the rules need to be re-examined to allow food scrap and or animal mortality composting on farm. How do we as composters work with farmers.

Contaminants in food scraps – Failure to source separate plastics is /will be an issue.