



DATE: October 27, 2021

TO: Waste Management Authority Board

FROM: Jeanne Nader, Senior Program Manager

SUBJECT: StopWaste Resources for Drought

SUMMARY

StopWaste leads several efforts designed to not only reduce waste, but also to achieve water savings. Water-saving efforts are critical in our current drought, deemed 'exceptional' by state water managers. At the October 27 meeting, staff will review our role in reducing water use in Alameda County.

DISCUSSION

It's California's 10th driest year on record, and water agencies are looking to achieve savings throughout their service areas. For decades, StopWaste has promoted the use of compost and recycled content mulch in local gardens and landscapes. Among its many beneficial properties, compost helps soil retain moisture, and a healthy three-inch layer of mulch minimizes water loss from evaporation. This work is part of a cycle that also includes educating residents, businesses and schools on proper "what-goes-where" disposal to keep compost streams clean and free of contamination.

Our efforts to promote compost and mulch are wide ranging, and include:

- Convening a network of water agencies, composters, nursery and hardscape vendor partners, and cities within Alameda County to make connections, for the coordinated promotion of rebates and education on sheet mulching, and to provide cross-training on compost, mulch, and healthy soil. We also use this network to make our partners aware of other StopWaste projects that intersect with water agency priorities, including SB 1383-related implications of compost use/application, watershed management for soil carbon sequestration, and heat pump water heaters.
- Developing comprehensive training and resources for plan reviewers and landscape professionals on compliance with California's Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance (WELO) that includes information on compost and mulch to meet WELO requirements.
- Working with jurisdictions and urban farm partners to develop compost hubs for easy distribution and increased compost utilization throughout the county.
- Distributing materials like compost how-to brochures to community groups, urban farms and member agencies to share with their networks.

- Providing lectures and resources for landscape professionals in the private and public sector on how and why to use compost and mulch to reduce irrigation demand.
- Providing technical assistance to urban farms and community gardens for on-site composting and compost use, as well as donating compost to community organizations growing food for local consumption during the pandemic.
- Extensive how-to information on making and using compost, including videos, and downloadable brochures, within the gardening pages on the StopWaste website (www.StopWaste.org/gardening). This site is continuously updated with additional information on StopWaste and community partner resources, workshops and plant sales.
- A regional website, www.LawntoGarden.org, that includes information on water agency rebates, a marketplace section for sourcing materials, and education for landscape professionals.
- A Facebook group, East Bay Garden Friends, which focuses on building healthy soil for a healthy garden. Home and community gardeners, and landscape professionals, share ideas, questions, resources, and more.

At the October 27 meeting, staff will review these resources and share opportunities for board members to help promote water-saving practices in their communities.

RECOMMENDATION

This item is for information only.