

OPTIMIZING SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT: PUBLIC COMPOSTING PROGRAMS IN VERMONT

Daniel C. Keeney

Department of Community Development and Applied Economics

The natural and appropriate scale of policy solutions is often at the level of problem causes. But in the case of waste generation the budgetary and knowledge-gap challenges of local solutions are often prohibitive. Diversion of solid waste from landfills to higher uses-- such as recycling and compost -- poses such challenges and necessitates a mixed-scale approach. The State of Vermont's evolving waste management policy is taking place at both the statewide and municipal level. This paper particularly examines issues of program management of mandated organics diversion, which will be phased in over the next 5 years. Proposed interventions will be examined for appropriateness of scale, cost-benefit analysis, and realistic goals in terms of diversion rates. Specific interventions to be considered will include new regulation and enforcement, variable rate pricing of pay-as-you-throw (PAYT) waste disposal, and incentive programs to develop composting infrastructure. I will evaluate policy tools for congruency with the policy goals articulated, and match them with a management form—private or public, municipal or statewide—that optimizes efficiency and efficacy. I will also catalogue assets and liabilities of representative solid waste districts and programs and examine associated costs opportunities using interviews with public and private stakeholders.

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