Promoting Strategies to Keep Food Waste Out of Landfills

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What is NEWMOA?

Northeast Waste Management Officials’ Association
- Non-profit, non-partisan interstate association
- Solid waste, hazardous waste, waste site cleanup, & pollution prevention programs
- CT, ME, MA, NH, NJ, NY, RI, & VT
- Formally recognized by EPA in 1986
- www.newmoa.org

Leading the Northeast to a Sustainable, Waste-Free Future
Promoting Strategies to
Keep Food Waste Out of Landfills

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Project Partners

Vermont
- Northeast Kingdom Waste Mgmt. District (NEKWMD)
- Department of Environmental Conservation

New Hampshire
- Lakes Region Planning Commission (LRPC)
- Department of Environmental Services

Maine
- Androscoggin Valley Council of Governments (AVCOG)
- Department of Environmental Protection
Why Food?

Vermont Waste Characterization (2012):
- Organics 1/3 of total waste generated by a typical family in Vermont
- Heavy & expensive to dispose of

Similar Findings by EPA
- Food scraps over 20% of trash

Big climate change impact
- Landfill disposal generates methane
- 23x more damaging than CO2
All of the resources that went into growing the food & getting it to the table are wasted

- Land & water
  - 25 percent of all fresh water use in the U.S. goes to growing food that is never eaten
- Energy & materials
  - Manufacturing, packaging, transportation
- Labor
- $ Money $
  - A family of four in the U.S. throws out about $1,300 to $2,200 worth of uneaten food each year on average

EPA & USDA
Goal:
Reduce food waste 50% by 2030
**Project Outline**

- **Reduce**
  - Handout for residents
  - Outreach at events in NH & VT

- **Recover & Donate**
  - Handout for businesses with local donation info
  - Stakeholder workshops in ME, NH, & VT

- **Compost (backyard)**
  - Handout for residents
  - 8-page guide with local information
  - Outreach at events in NH & VT

- **Project website:**
  www.newmoa.org/solidwaste/projects/food/reduction.cfm

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**Where Were We Working?**

- **Northeast Kingdom Waste Management District**
  - Lyndonville, VT (www.nekwmd.org)

- **Lakes Regional Planning Commission**
  - Meredith, NH (www.lakesrpc.org)

- **Androscoggin Valley Council of Governments**
  - Auburn, ME (www.avcog.org)
Focus on residents at home

Key messages:

- **Wasted food = wasted $$**
- Think before you shop
- Eat your leftovers!
- Store food so it lasts
- Don’t automatically throw out food that’s past the labeled date
  - A huge source of waste!
Date labels are NOT related to safety!

And there are NO standards

- Selected by manufacturers
  - Conservative estimates of top quality
  - Keep in mind that manufacturers have an incentive to get you to buy more

- Only federal requirement for date label is for infant formula

- Some states have scattered requirements:
  - ME only requires dates on packaged shellfish
  - NH only requires dates on pre-packaged sandwiches
  - VT only requires dates on packaged shellfish & ready-to-eat

Date Labels – Confusion?

Retailers and consumers face a variety of dates on the products. The dates are not related to the safety, but actually provide you with an idea of when the food feels good. They are not related to when the food is still safe to eat. “Best before” “sell by” “use by” and “expiration” are meant to reflect only the quality of the product. These are suggestions related to quality. The values are not based on science and do not go by laws. For the most part, you can treat your senses to know when food is still good. For example, milk, brown sugar, fresh herbs, and many other items are used without the “best by” “sell by” and “expiration” date labels. The numbers on the dates are meant for the store staff so that they can manage inventory. Most of the dates are only to that date, if it still has a high-quality shelf life for some time afterward. For example, eggs are used for three weeks or more. The dates on the cartons to reduce consumer confusion surrounding date labels that are unsafe to eat. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and safety organizations around the country recommend to make informed decisions on food product labeling to encourage manufacturers and retailers to label using only a “best if used by” date.

More Information:
- National Resources Defense Council (NRDC) Save the Food www.savethefood.org
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Reusing Wasted Food at Home www.epa.gov/recycle/food-saving-factsheet.pdf

This information is made available at www.newmoa.org/solidwaste/projects/food/Reducing_Food_Waste_Template.pdf

New Handout
Throwing out needlessly = throwing out $$

Virtually all food is safe to eat after the date & most still at top quality

Examples:
- Non-liquid dairy (yogurt/cheese): 7+ days
- Eggs: 3+ weeks
- Canned/boxed: 3+ months

Feeding America & Vermont Foodbank acceptance guideline fact sheets

County Fair in Vermont

Interacted with 200+ people over 2 days
- ~50% thought labels are about safety & throw food out
- Reported to be a source of conflict in the home
- Many took a photo of display panel to share with others
Source Reduction
Food for People
Food for Animals

Compost
Disposal

Backyard Composting

Benefits:
- Improves soil health - improves water retention & reduces the need to buy fertilizers & compost
- Saves you and/or your town money since the material is removed from the waste stream
- Reduces the methane emissions from landfilling
- Eliminates the need to store & transport food scraps to a collection facility (if one exists)
- Provides an option when a local food scrap collection facility is not available
You do NOT have to do it perfectly

Inside Container:

- Airtight = anaerobic = smells
- Open/holes = aerobic = no smell (but could have fruit flies)

Outside Container - follow the 1 to 3 rule:

- 1 part “greens” (food scraps, fresh cut grass)
- 3 parts “browns” (dried leaves, dried grass, paper)
- No meat, dairy, or fats (these can attract animals)
- Mix occasionally & add water if gets too dry

Simple & Easy!
Free Composter Raffle
- 2 Farmer Markets in Laconia, NH
- 2 days at Caledonia County Fair in Lyndon, VT
- Good “excuse” to grab attention & interact

FYI: Other 2 Display Panels

Reduce
Save $$$

Buy Less & Use What You Buy

Plan Ahead
- What do I want to eat this week?
- What do I already have? What do I need?
- Make a list before shopping

Eat Your Leftovers

Store Food So It Lasts
- Rotate food to put newer items behind older
- Freeze for later use

Food
Compost at Home
It’s Easy!
- Buy or make compost container for your yard
- Collect kitchen food scraps
- Bring them outside & add them to leaves & other yard waste in the compost
- No yard - no problem; several options to compost just food scraps indoors

Benefits
- Reduces your need to buy fertilizer & compost - saves $$
- Reduces your trash & saves $$

Get Started Today
Food Insecurity:
- 1 in 7 in Androscoggin Valley of Maine
- 1 in 9 in New Hampshire
- 1 in 5 in Northeast Kingdom of Vermont

Opportunity for more recovery & donation

Generators don’t always understand they have:
- Liability protections:
  - Federal Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Act
  - Additional in some states
- Tax benefits – federal (& many states)

Users don’t always understand date labels!
Best Practices for Diverting Food for Donation

Legal Fact Sheets:
• Date Labels
• Tax Incentives
• Liability Protections
• Animal Feed

MA, CT, RI, VT, TN, NC
NH and ME just completed

SLIDE FROM HARVARD FOOD LAW AND POLICY CLINIC

Promoting Recovery & Donation
Primary purpose:

Bring “Generators” of surplus food together with “Users” to learn & make new connections

Process:

- Establish stakeholder groups to plan
  - Set agenda & logistics
  - Publicize

- Website & advance registration requested (no fee)

- Hold event
  - Before & after surveys
  - Display / information-sharing tables

- Debrief
  - Lessons learned & next steps
Planning:
Existing Northeast Kingdom Food Cycle Coalition:
- NEKWMD & VT DEC
- Vermont Foodbank
- Northeastern Vermont Development Association
- Several others

Wanted to integrate portions of Anthony Bourdain’s movie “Wasted! The Story of Food Waste”

Agenda topics:
- Current recovery & donation – VT Foodbank
- Liability protections, tax incentives, date labels – EPA
- Recovering overage from farms – Salvation Farms
- Making a new product from form waste – VT99 Meats

Outreach:
- Postcards mailed to 100+ businesses & organizations
- Plus e-mails & follow-up e-mails
- Follow-up phone calls to most
Results:
- 25 attendees
  - 4 “generators” (3 farms & 1 hospital)
  - 5 “users” & 16 “other”
- Administered before/after surveys – 19 “after”
  - 12 gained ideas to increase recovery & donation
  - 15 made helpful personal connections
- “wrong” answers reduced:
  - Tax deductions: 7 to 2
  - Liability protections: 7 to 1
  - Date labels:
    - Yogurt/cheese: 11 to 2
    - Eggs: 9 to 2
    - Non-perishable: 5 to 1

Lessons Learned:
- Difficult to get generator & users attendees
  - Time: Extra-curricular unpaid activity
  - Businesses do not have extra staff to send
  - Users often mostly volunteers
  - Location was excellent but ~45 minutes from interstate
  - Need to go to them – meeting of their association
- Waste & recovery/donation at schools of interest
  - While the movie is super-interesting, it took time that might be better spent on interactions in the room
- Networking opportunity highly appreciated

Info & presentations posted:
www.newmoa.org/events/event.cfm?m=333
Planning:

Stakeholder Group:
- LRPC & NH DES
- New Hampshire Food Bank
- New Hampshire Grocers Association
- NH Farm-to-School (& NH Gleans)
- Belknap County Conservation District (& NH Gleans)

Wanted to include feeding animals & composting

Agenda topics:
- Current recovery & donation – NH Food Bank
- Liability protections, tax incentives, date labels – EPA
- Gleaning – NH Gleans
- Feeding animals - NH State Veterinarian
- Composting - UNH

Outreach:

E-mails & follow-up e-mails
Some phone calls
Notice in primary local newspaper
Results:

- 32 attendees
  - 4 “generators” (2 farms, 1 grocery, & 1 restaurant)
  - 10 “users” & 18 “other”

- Administered before/after surveys – 18 “after”
  - 11 gained ideas to increase recovery & donation
  - 15 made helpful personal connections

- “wrong” answers reduced:
  - Tax deductions: 5 to 4
  - Liability protections: 11 to 1
  - Date labels:
    - Yogurt/cheese: 14 to 2
    - Eggs: 13 to 0
    - Non-perishable: 7 to 0

Lessons Learned

- Difficult to get generator & users attendees
  - Time: Extra-curricular unpaid activity
    - Businesses do not have extra staff to send
    - Users often mostly volunteers
  - Need to go to them – meeting of their association

- Build sharing/feedback time into the agenda instead of at the end
  - Some key people had to leave early

- Networking opportunity highly appreciated

Info & presentations posted:
www.newmoa.org/events/event.cfm?m=338
Planning:

Stakeholder Group:
- AVCOG & ME DEP
- Good Shepard Food Bank
- Maine Cooperative Extension (Master Gardeners)
- Maine Gleaning Network

Wanted to include reduction & composting

Agenda topics:
- Reduce – LeanPath, Bates College, Whole Crops
- Current recovery & donation – Good Shepard Food Bank
  - Hannaford Supermarket example
- Liability protections, tax incentives, date labels – EPA
- Gleaning – Androscoggin Gleaners
- Commercial composters – We Compost It! & Agri-Energy

Outreach:

E-mails & follow-up e-mails
Some phone calls
Results:

- 30 attendees
  - 3 “generators” (1 farm & 2 cafeterias)
  - 5 “users” & 22 “other”
- Administered before/after surveys – 16 “after”
  - 12 gained ideas to increase recovery & donation
  - 12 made helpful personal connections
- “wrong” answers reduced:
  - Tax deductions: 11 to 1
  - Liability protections: 8 to 0
  - Date labels:
    - Yogurt/cheese: 8 to 0
    - Eggs: 8 to 0
    - Non-perishable: 2 to 0

Lessons Learned

- Difficult to get generator & users attendees
  - Time: Extra-curricular unpaid activity
    - Businesses do not have extra staff to send
    - Users often mostly volunteers
- Need to go to them – meeting of their association
- A lot of topics & presentations – ran out of time!
- Networking opportunity highly appreciated

Info & presentations posted:
www.newmoa.org/events/event.cfm?m=339
In Conclusion

- Reducing is always best!
  - Saves resources & $$$
  - More education on date labels needed!
    - Opportunity to make a big impact
- Recovery & donation next best
  - A lot of great things are already happening, but can always do more:
    - Bring more farms into gleaning
    - More generators donating more items
  - More networking always beneficial
- Composting always better than disposal
Other NEWMOA Resources

Other USDA Projects

- Improving Safety & Reducing Waste at Rural Transfer Stations
- Bulky waste
- Pay-as-you-throw
- Waste Paint

All projects included outreach publications, workshops, and wrap-up webinar

- All publications customizable template versions: [www.newmoa.org/solidwaste/projects](http://www.newmoa.org/solidwaste/projects)
- All presentations available on project websites
**Improving Safety at Rural TS**

- Visited 8 transfer stations in rural NH & VT
- Workshops in NH & VT:
  - Presentations at: [www.newmoa.org/solidwaste/projects/transferstations/workshops.cfm](http://www.newmoa.org/solidwaste/projects/transferstations/workshops.cfm)
  - State OSHAs & municipal insurers participated
- End-of-Project Webinar:
  - Slides & recording at: [www.newmoa.org/events/event.cfm?m=292](http://www.newmoa.org/events/event.cfm?m=292)
  - Recording might be a good training resource

**Reducing Waste Disposal**

- Focus on communicating with public
  - 5 handouts & accompanying posters
    - Reducing Your Waste
    - The Benefits of Reuse...
    - WHY Recycle...
    - Recycle Right!
    - Don’t Trash That!
- Workshops in NH & VT:
  - Presentations at: [www.newmoa.org/solidwaste/projects/transferstations/workshops.cfm](http://www.newmoa.org/solidwaste/projects/transferstations/workshops.cfm)
- End-of-Project Webinar:
  - Slides & recording at: [www.newmoa.org/events/event.cfm?m=293](http://www.newmoa.org/events/event.cfm?m=293)
Reduce Handout

The Benefits of REUSE...

Instead of discarding items you no longer want or need, consider whether they can be reused. Reuse is different from recycling. When you "reuse" an item, you keep it whole or intact and then sell or donate it for use again.

REUSE has many benefits, including:

• Saving money on disposal costs
• Conserving natural resources, space, and raw materials
• Reusing products and materials boosts the economy and reduces job creation
• Helping people who need the items but cannot afford to buy new

THINK BEFORE YOU BUY

By basing why or what you purchase, consider whether you can reuse something from someone else, and reduce the amount of "stuff" that you need to buy.

Benefits of Donating Include:

• Your donation is tax deductible
• Provides items to people in need
• Donating to charity helps another’s cause

DONATE GOOD QUALITY ITEMS

Items to consider donating include:

• Clothing
• Books
• Furniture
• Electronic devices
• Household items

Benefits of a Fix-It Clinic Include:

• Items are fixed for FREE (except the cost of any new replacement parts)
• Owners learn valuable repair skills
• Connections are built within the community
• The amount of reusable items thrown to the trash is reduced


Reuse Template version that anyone can customize for their local area:

www.newmoa.org/solidwaste/projects/transferstations/publications.cfm
Template version that anyone can customize for their local area:
www.newmoa.org/solidwaste/projects/transferstations/publications.cfm
Not in the Trash

Template version available
www.newmoa.org/solidwaste/projects/transferstations/publications.cfm

Bulky Waste Resources

4 brochures with detail: furniture, mattresses, carpet, & large rigid plastics
Handout for the public with local information

www.newmoa.org/solidwaste/projects/bulky
**PAYT Resources**

- www.newmoa.org/solidwaste/projects/smart
  - Case studies of 11 rural communities – some with before/after cost data
  - Handout for the public to generate interest in PAYT
  - “Fair Pricing Strategies” brochure for “decision-makers” with case studies
  - SMART Toolkit for Rural Communities – website compilation of resources

**Waste Paint Resources**

- www.newmoa.org/solidwaste/projects/paint
  - Brochure with detail & case studies
  - Handout for the public with local information
Questions?

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