

FISCAL YEAR 2009 PROJECT

Solid Waste

Promoting Agricultural Plastics Recycling

Project Strategy: Promote recycling of agricultural plastics in rural areas of Maine, New Hampshire, New York, and Vermont by conducting training and providing technical assistance.

Plastics are widely used in agriculture today, but the end-of-life management of these materials is a growing problem in the Northeast. Stakeholders estimate that about half of the plastic used on dairy farms in the Northeast is burned in open fires, releasing such harmful air pollutants as dioxins, heavy metals, and particulates. Much of the remainder is buried on-site, resulting in clogged water channels, increased breeding areas for mosquitoes, and choking hazards for livestock. Recycling alleviates the environmental and health problems caused by open burning and dumping and costs less than landfill disposal. However, only a small fraction of farm, nursery, and greenhouse plastic waste generated in the Northeast is recycled.

This project started in FY 2008 and will continue through FY 2009. By the end of the project, NEWMOA will produce and deliver a training module, outreach materials, information on environmental and health hazards associated with improper disposal of this material, and a web page for technical assistance providers. NEWMOA has contracted with Dr. Lois Levitan, Program Leader of the Cornell Environmental Risk Analysis Program and the Recycling Agriculture Plastics Project, for technical expertise on all aspects of the project.

The project's goals are to:

- raise awareness of recycling options
- promote best management practices in handling of agricultural plastics
- identify solutions to the agricultural plastics disposal problem in targeted rural areas
- increase recycling of farm plastics in these four states over the next five to ten years

NEWMOA plans to achieve these goals by:

- developing a training program and guidance materials for the local technical assistance providers who work directly with farmers (i.e., state agricultural staff, solid waste and soil and water conservation district employees, and county agricultural extension staff)
- delivering training workshops to technical assistance providers and farmers in rural areas
- providing technical assistance on how to launch a recycling program to the local environmental and agricultural agency staff

In FY 2009, NEWMOA will present a minimum of six training workshops in New York, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine. This project is funded by a USDA Rural Utilities Service Solid Waste Management grant.

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