### Promoting Strategies to Keep Food Waste Out of Landfills

Jennifer Griffith December 17, 2018



#### 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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Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Rural Utilities Services.

#### **Project Partners**

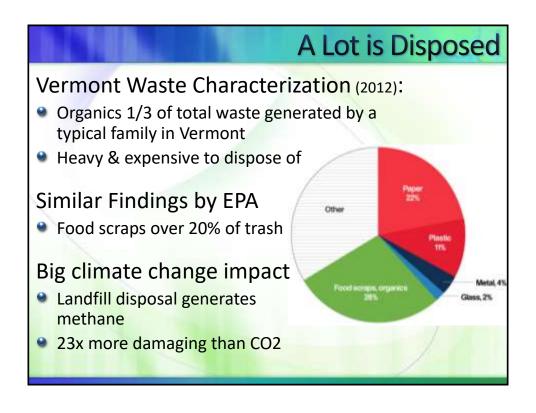
- Vermont
  - ❖ Northeast Kingdom Waste Mgmt. District (NEKWMD)
  - Department of Environmental Conservation
- New Hampshire
  - Lakes Region Planning Commission (LRPC)
  - Department of Environmental Services
- Maine
  - Androscoggin Valley Council of Governments (AVCOG)
  - Department of Environmental Protection







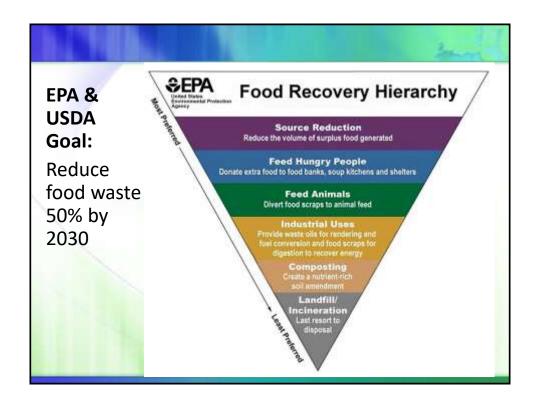




#### **Waste of Resources**

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



#### **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



#### **Source Reduction**

Food for People Food for Animals Compost Disposal

#### **Reducing Waste**

- 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!



#### The Problem with Date Labels

- 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

#### **Tremendous Waste**

- 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
    - https://dec.vermont.gov/waste-management/solid/materialsmgmt/food-donation/#Food-Donation-Guidance

#### **Outreach on Dates**

#### 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

# Waste Date Labels ≠ Safety

#### Don't Automatically Throw It Out!

#### Trust Your Senses

. Use the "look" & "amell" tests.

#### So What ARE The Dates?

- · A manufacturer's guarantee of top quality
- Still OK to eat after date:
  - Yoguri & choose -7+ days
  - liggs 3+ weeks
  - Canned/broad 3+ montu.
  - · Lore of other types of fixed

#### 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



#### Messaging

- 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!





# Outreach Free Composter Raffle 2 Farmer Markets in Laconia, NH 2 days at Caledonia County Fair in Lyndon, VT Good "excuse" to grab attention & interact

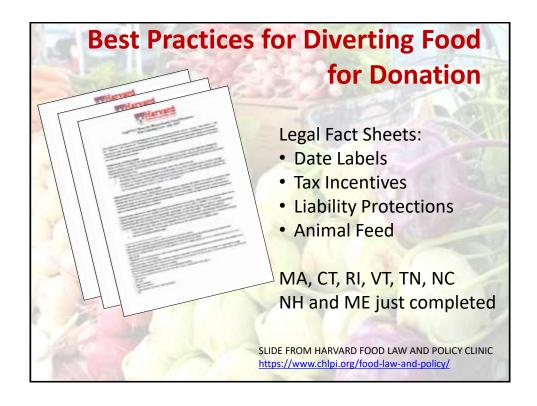


### Source Reduction Food for People

Food for Animals Compost Disposal

#### **Recovery & Donation**

- 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!



# Promoting Recovery & Donation



#### Workshops

- 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

#### Northeast Kingdom in VT

- 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 Save the Date! FOOD RECOVERY & DONATION FARMS OF THE REST OF THE PROPERTY O

#### **NEKWMD**

- 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

#### **NEKWMD**

- 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

#### Lakes Region in NH

- 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



#### **LRPC**

- 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

#### **LRPC**

- 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

#### Androscoggin Valley in ME

- 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



#### **AVCOG**

- 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

#### **AVCOG**

- 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
- > All presentations available on project websites

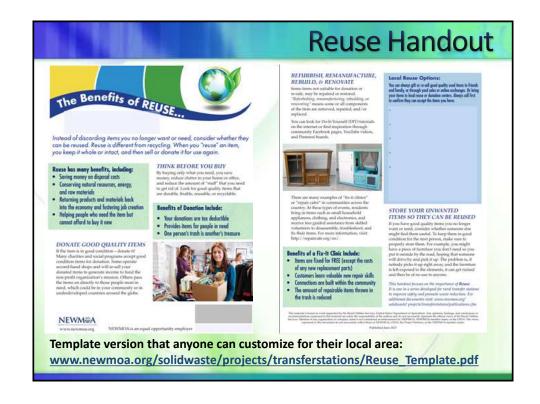
#### **Improving Safety at Rural TS**

- Visited 8 transfer stations in rural NH & VT
- Workshops in NH & VT:
  - Presentations at: www.newmoa.org/solidwaste/projects/transfe rstations/workshops.cfm
  - State OSHAs & municipal insurers participated
- End-of-Project Webinar:
  - Slides & recording at: 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
- End-of-Project Webinar:
  - Slides & recording at: www.newmoa.org/events/event.cfm?m=293













#### **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



#### **Questions?**

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