

CONTAMINANT MANAGEMENT & COMPOST QUALITY

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Green Mountain Compost Facility



Constructed in 2010

Covered Aerated Static Piles

Typical aeration period: 6-8 weeks

What are contaminants?

Characterization and tolerance thresholds depend on what you're trying to achieve

- Premium Quality Compost Products?
- Maximum Diversion from MSW stream?
- Animal Feed?
- Anaerobic Digestion Feed?









Compostable Plastics: a growing reality



The Dilemma

Poly Styrene Clamshells

Compostable Plastic (PLA Cups)

Who Knows?!?!





The History of Compostable Plastics at Green Mountain Compost

- Mid 1990's – early compostable liner bags trialed at ICP
- Late 1990's – foodscrap collection numbers grow as compostable liner bags began to replace traditional trash bags



The History of Compostable Plastics at Green Mountain Compost

- Early 2000's – new to market “compostable” plastics emerge on scene
- 2006 – influx of compostable plastics begins, as larger partners buy into green marketing
- 2007 – 2009 – appearance of first noticeable volume of full spectrum of foodservice comprised of compostable plastics.

The History of Compostable Plastics at Green Mountain Compost

- 2007-2008 – processing residuals awash in a sea of “compostable cutlery” that failed to compost.
 - Staff handpicks hundreds of thousands of forks, knives, spoons from overs piles



The History of Compostable Plastics at Green Mountain Compost

- December 2009 – implementation of ban on all cutlery from compost facility



- Fall 2010 – ICP/CSWD consider banning all compostable plastics following threat to organic certification of finished compost

The History of Compostable Plastics at Green Mountain Compost

- July 2011 – Vermont Organic Farmers (statewide certifier of USDA National Organic Program guidelines) bans compostable plastics from all “organic” compost sold in the state
- July 2011 – GMC decides to allow compostable plastics in feedstock mix, plans dual-stream composting at new facility in Williston

The History of Compostable Plastics at Green Mountain Compost

- 2014 – GMC lifts ban on compostable cutlery following a lengthy study showing adequate degradation in our system

Pulling “Organic” out of Organics

- “Approved for use...”
- National Organic Program
 - Compostable plastics disallowed due to synthetic manufacturing process, regardless of residuals remaining in finished product
- Trace amounts of persistent herbicides allowed, compostable plastics not allowed



Pros and Cons of Compostable Plastics

Pros

- Reported greenhouse gas reduction in manufacturing
- Increased convenience
- Potential for increased diversion from landfills
- Compost promoting by major players
- Guilt-free disposal

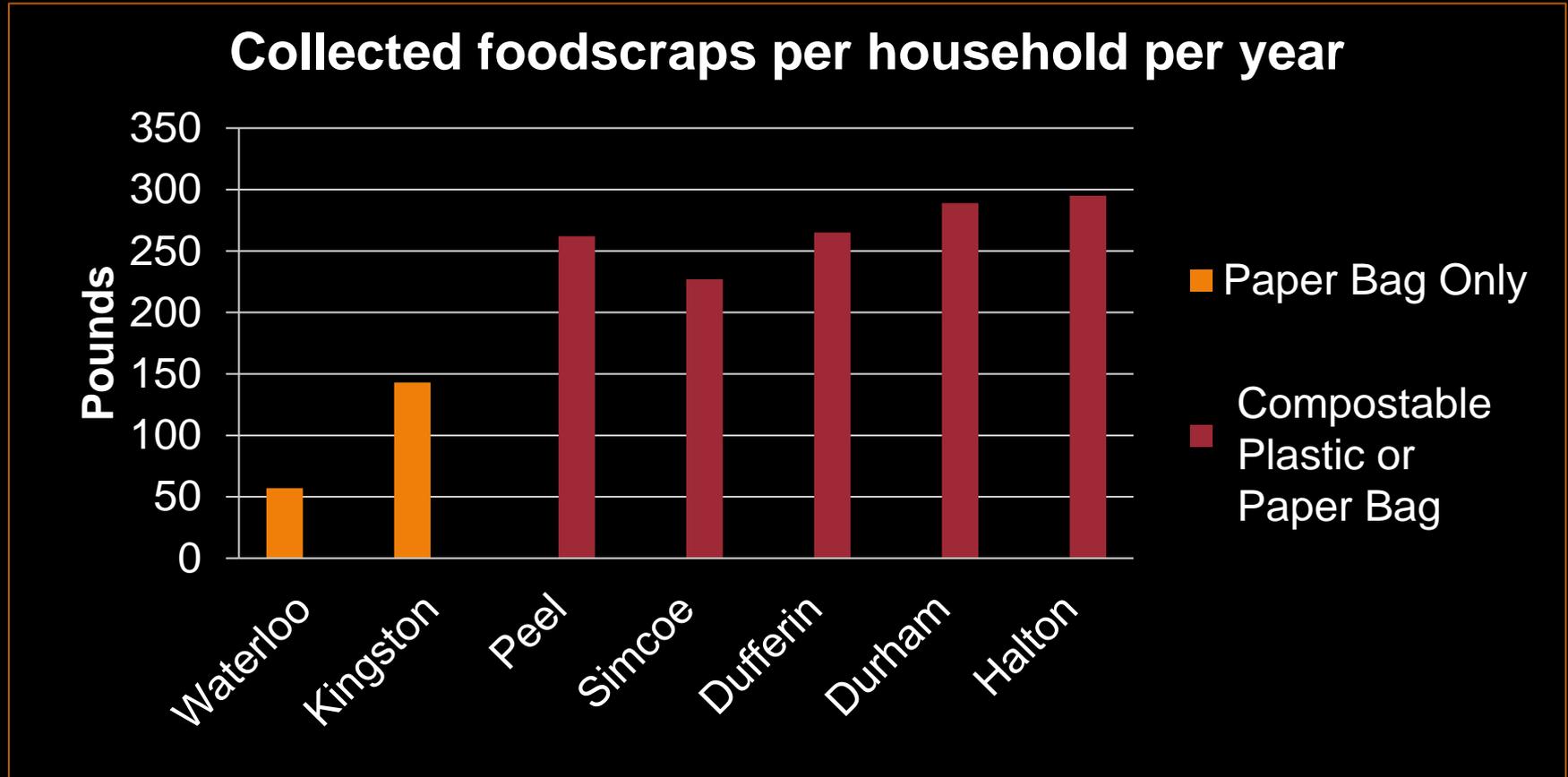
Cons

- Zero benefit to quality, volume of finished product
- End of life issues - Cart before the horse
- Mistrust of manufacturers
- Aesthetics/Handling
- Increased contamination
- Confused Consumers
- Varying degradation rates
- Guilt-free disposal

More compostable plastics = More contamination



Curbside Organics Collection in Toronto, Canada



Source: Douglas, Dave. (2011). Utilization of BPI Approved Compostable Bags for the Advancement of Residential Source Separated Organics (Kitchen) Diversion – Canadian Case Studies Experience & Lessons Learned, US Composting Council AGM, 2011.

