



# NEW YORK STATE ENVIRONMENTAL EXCELLENCE AWARD CASE STUDY

**Onondaga County Resource Recovery Agency - Honored for their municipal food waste composting program – turning local organic waste into a sustainable product**

## SUMMARY

Onondaga County Resource Recovery Agency (OCRRA), awarded in 2011, developed an innovative composting technique that was cost effective and reduced energy use



and greenhouse gas emissions and serves as a model for municipalities. This compost program clearly demonstrates how a community can cost-effectively capture the local organics stream and achieve a “Beyond Waste” system of sustainable materials management.

## BENEFITS

A partnership with Syracuse University adds nearly 7 tons per week of pre-consumer food waste from seven campus dining halls. In 2010, Syracuse University diverted over 137 tons of food waste from their waste stream, which saved more than \$4,500 in tipping fees.

By using an innovative composting technique, Extended Aerated Static Piles (EASP), organic waste can be composted in less time than traditional methods and using less energy, which means greater greenhouse gas reductions. OCRRA produced the first municipally generated compost certified by the US Composting Council’s Seal of Testing Assurance. It is a high-quality soil amendment that can be used instead of environmentally damaging fertilizers. OCRRA has generated jobs, reduced disposal costs by diverting food waste from the landfill and has helped New York State achieve its “beyond waste” goals and objectives.

## KEY METRICS

- Diverted over 2 million pounds of food waste and food process wastes
- 50% reduction in energy/fuel costs
- Educated 150 schools about composting and distributed newsletters to more than 150,000 households on a quarterly basis.

## ABOUT OCRRA

- Manages Onondaga County’s compost and recycling programs
- Onondaga County has a population of approximately 181,000 households and a population of 466,000

**NYS Environmental Excellence Award:** Annual recognition of outstanding innovative and sustainable projects or programs and unique partnerships that are improving and protecting New York State’s environmental resources and contributing to a stronger economy

## A MODEL OF EXCELLENCE

- The process of converting food waste into compost using EASP takes as little as 60 days, compared to an average of 9 to 12 months using windrow systems
- The compost pile does not need to be moved during the process
- No odor or leaching is produced during the composting period
- Reduces methane produced under the aerobic conditions of a landfill
- Produced the only municipally generated Class A compost in New York

## HIGHLIGHTS

OCCRA used extended aerated static piles (EASP) which is innovative and unique in comparison to conventional composting systems. The forced air system, which can be adjusted for all incoming food waste conditions, helps prevent generation of leachate by controlling in-pile moisture concentrations. Overall, the EASP system reduces the amount of time, equipment and space needed to compost food and yard waste, all of which lowers energy costs and greenhouse gas generation, producing an increased environmental benefit.



OCCRA partnered with Syracuse University (SU), the largest university in Central New York, to process nearly 7 tons per week of pre-consumer food waste from seven SU dining halls. This has helped the university achieve its sustainability goals and its commitment under the American College & University President's Climate Commitment.

## FUNDING

OCCRA is one of the few municipal programs that receives no tax support. The compost site is funded by the sale of residential compost passes that allow residents to drop off yard waste each season. Commercial entities do incur a charge to drop off yard and food waste. Funding also comes from the sale of finished compost to residents and businesses which reduces that use of environmentally harmful fertilizers.