

Teton County Integrated Solid Waste & Recycling

# Food Waste Collection Implementation Toolkit



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A compactor truck full of food waste. Photo by Stephanie Minor.

# Introduction

## Background

In 2017, the Teton County Road to Zero Waste Initiative and Subaru of America sponsored Zero Landfill Initiative in National Parks, together piloted a food waste collection program in Grand Teton National Park. This significant collaboration for Teton County, Wyoming recognized food waste as a key leverage point towards meeting the County's goal of 60% waste diversion by 2030. The Grand Teton Lodge Company and Signal Mountain Lodge participated as pilot adopters and successfully diverted 247 tons of food waste from the landfill over the 2017, 2018 and 2019 summer seasons. As the 2019 program finished in October of 2019, the County will expand its food waste collection program to early adopter restaurants and other food-producing entities.

## Teton County Food Waste Collection Program

The County food waste collection program begins in 2020 with a small number of food producing entities. The implementation of this program will be a big step on the Road to Zero Waste, as a recent waste audit identified 40% of waste sent to the landfill as compostable food waste. To ensure a successful and robust county-wide program, the program will start small with a handful of early adopter food-producing entities. Most importantly, the program will collect food waste only. No items such as compostable to-go ware, paper or coffee filters will be accepted. As an early adopter, you can provide immense benefits to the growth of the program by ensuring clean food waste collection in your kitchen.

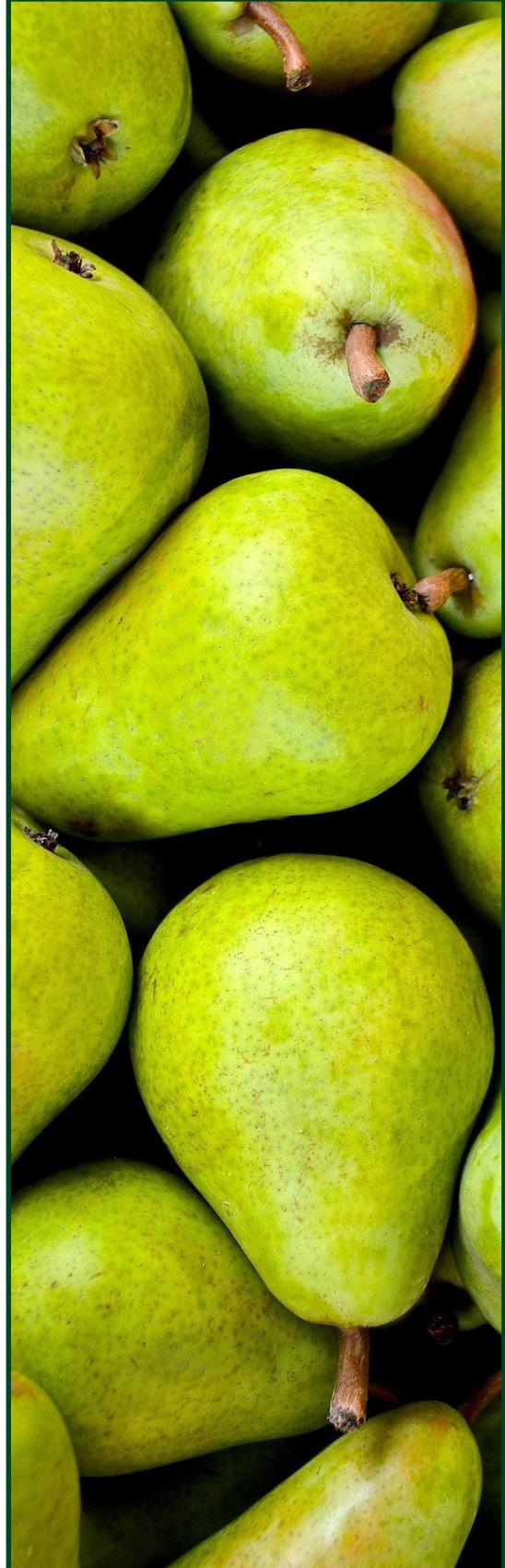


Eric Kimball of Signal Mountain Lodge checking on their food waste bins.

# Why Bother Composting?

**Food waste collection programs in restaurants and food-producing entities can have significant environmental, economic, and social benefits for the Teton County community.**

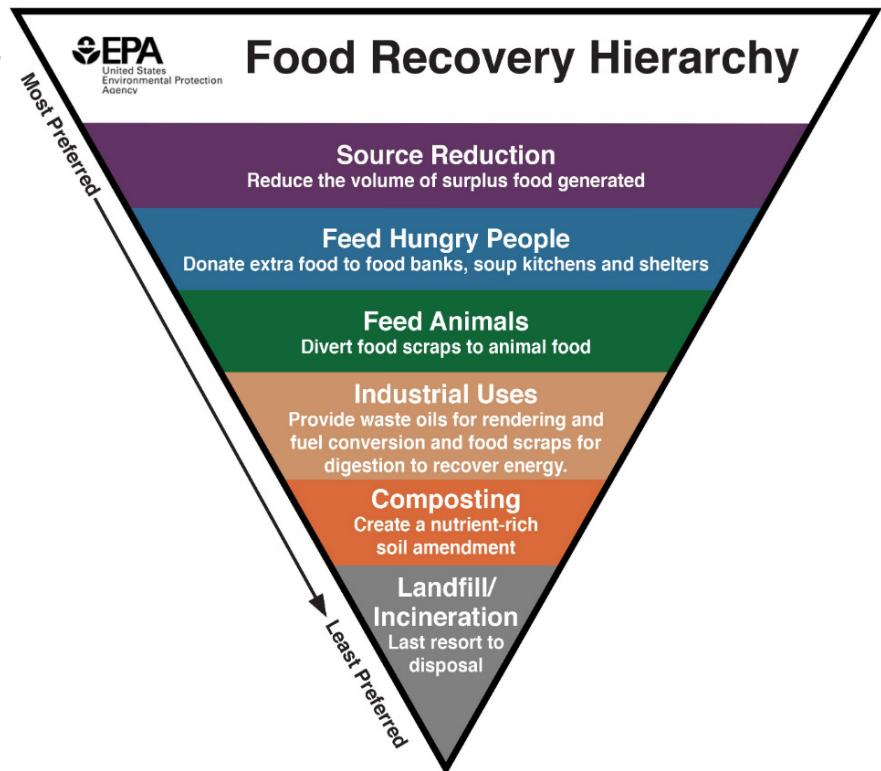
1. Food waste makes up a significant portion of trash sent to the landfill. Separating food waste for collection can reduce your garbage hauling fees.
2. Sending unsorted food waste to the landfill contribute to greenhouse gas emissions. In Teton County, this includes increased CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in transporting heavy loads to the landfill over 100 miles from town and increased methane production as food waste decomposes anaerobically in the landfill. Composting food waste also increases landfill capacity.
3. Properly collected food waste can be recycled as **compost**, a nutrient-rich soil amendment, which can replace synthetic chemical fertilizers on local farms, gardens and landscaping.
4. Collecting food waste can raise community awareness around wasted resources. Recognizing the types of waste food can inform purchasing practices and increase efficiencies in your organization. Participating as an early adopter, you will highlight the importance of food waste collection for other food producers while engaging employees and potentially customers in a commitment to sustainable practices.



# Food Recovery

Composting isn't the only step to consider taking in reducing food waste. If we examine the Food Recovery Hierarchy, we can see a wide range of food waste reduction methods.

The second tier of the hierarchy is Feed Hungry People. Hole Food Rescue is an organization in Teton County which recovers and redistributes healthy food to the local community. With the help of volunteers, they collect landfill bound food from food retailers and redistribute it to feed people in the community. Any food left over is then fed to farm animals or composted.



## WHAT FOOD CAN BE DONATED TO HOLE FOOD RESCUE?

|                         | PRODUCE  | DAIRY & REFRIGERATED                   | GROCERY   | DELI                               | MEAT   |
|-------------------------|--|--|---|------------------------------------|--|
| <b>YES<br/>please</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good looking</li> <li>• Edible</li> </ul>     | 1 week or less past expiration date    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Packaged</li> <li>• Canned</li> <li>• Bulk Items</li> </ul>                            | Day of or before "sell by" date    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frozen before or on date of expiration</li> <li>• Non-expired unfrozen</li> </ul> |
| <b>NO<br/>thank you</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moldy</li> <li>• Extremely bruised</li> </ul> | More than 1 week after expiration date | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expired baby food</li> <li>• Open packages</li> <li>• Extremely Dented Cans</li> </ul> | Any dates after the "sell by" date | Meat frozen after date of expiration   |

Questions?

Information at [holefoodrescue.org](http://holefoodrescue.org) or contact Hannah at 307-201-3010 or [hannah@holefoodrescue.org](mailto:hannah@holefoodrescue.org)

# Where to Start

## Best Practices for Food Waste Collection

### Collect FOOD ONLY

- This includes all food: meat, dairy, other animal products except shellfish\*, fruit, vegetable scraps, grains, etc.
- Strain as much liquid from soups and other liquid-based foods.
- To-go ware, even when compostable, leads to higher rates of contamination and a lower quality compost product.
- See section 5 for more information and printable signage with common types of contamination.

### Thoughtfully Consider Bin Placement

- Many kitchens struggle with space. Think creatively about where and what size collection bins will fit in your facilities and ensure easy, clean food waste collection for employees.
- For example, pair garbage with composting bins and limit the availability of garbage cans in areas without interior food waste collection bins.
- Place a bin for food service gloves adjacent to the food waste collection bin.

### Train Early and Often

- Include food waste collection training in the initial employee trainings.
- Retrain employees when any contamination is found in bins.
- Address food waste collection success and/or concerns in regular employee meetings or on break room announcement boards.

\*Shellfish includes but is not limited to the meat and shell/exoskeleton of: shrimp, lobster, clams, mussels, scallops, and oysters. Shellfish are not allowed in the Teton County Food Composting Program.



# Where to Start

Place posters in highly visible locations to raise awareness and provide clear direction to food prep and cleaning teams

- Place posters in high traffic areas such as the kitchen and the employee break room
- Make sure all bins have corresponding signs
- Communicate with multilingual, simple, and accessible language and include images

## Establish a “Compost Champion”

This will be the point person for food waste collection. It could be someone who already manages your organization’s waste and recycling services, someone who works closely with kitchen employees or someone who is passionate about waste reduction and sustainability,

Responsibilities include:

- Training
- Monitoring
- Communication with ISWR, your management, and other employees about challenges and successes.
- Sharing a passion and commitment to the waste diversion mission with kitchen employees and leading by example

The Compost Champion should regularly monitor collection bins, especially at the start of the program and with newly trained employees.

- Check interior bins and external dumpsters for contamination with non-compostable items (e.g. plastic, gloves, to-go ware). Pull out these items to discuss with all staff and consider retraining.

It is also important to have support from upper management throughout the design and implementation of your food waste diversion program.

## Empty and Clean Bins Often

- Expect to empty and clean bins on a regular basis to avoid odors, vermin, and pests.
- If necessary, use compostable bin liners. Food waste is heavy, so empty interior bins before they are overfilled.

Compostable bin liners are currently accepted, but are not ideal. ISWR will accept compostable bin liners but would prefer that they are used only when necessary.

## Encourage sustainability efforts across your organization and the wider community.

- Creating a culture committed to sustainability can help increase commitment to food waste collection.
- Make it fun through kitchen competition and/or other incentives that maximize food waste diversion with zero contamination.
- Post progress on waste diversion (the amount of food waste collected weekly, monthly) in the employee break rooms and common areas.
- Consider sharing and celebrating your composting practices with the public.



# The Fatal Flaw of Food Waste Collection

The quality of the finished compost product is directly related to the material going into the process. When there is contamination in the food waste collected, the compost is contaminated.



**Chronic contamination could lead to fines and/or rejection from the program.**

When in Doubt, Throw it Out!

CONTAMINATION

=

LANDFILL



CONTAMINACIÓN

=

BASURERO

¡Si hay Duda, a la Basura!

One way to ensure a clean, safe compost product is by limiting acceptable materials to food only\* in the early stages of a collection program. For those reasons, it is imperative that employees involved in any stage of the collection understand the do's and don'ts of food waste collection.

\*With the exception of shellfish. Shellfish includes but is not limited to the meat and shell/exoskeleton of: shrimp, lobster, clams, mussels, scallops, and oysters. Shellfish are not allowed in the Teton County Food Composting program.

# How to Start

## Contact ISWR



Contact Teton County Integrated Solid Waste and Recycling for pricing services, bin options, and pick up schedules. 307-733-7678 or ISWRoutreach@tetoncountywy.gov

## Place Bins



Place bins in accessible locations that are easy to find. Use buckets with labeling or toters that are green, so they stick out from trash receptacles. Consider placing bins near trash cans so the disposal of waste is faster. Locations could include prep, cooking, and dish washing areas.

## Hang Signs in Highly Visible Locations



Place posters in highly visible locations to raise awareness and provide clear directions to employees.

## Designate a Compost Champion



You can designate a few members of have one per shift to answer questions, encourage participation, and ensure quality by monitoring bins for contamination. Encourage employees who are passionate, dedicated, and knowledgeable about composting to volunteer.

## Train Employees



During training, be clear on expectations while creating a safe and positive atmosphere. Creating a game or contest can provide incentives and help motivate employees. Never punish or shame employees. Rather, educate and engage your employees to help them understand that this is a critically important issue. Consider organizing an employee field trip to visit the County's composting facility to see how your food waste gets turned into compost.

## Continually Assess



Your compost champions should conduct spot audits for non-compostable items. Pull out items and discuss issues with employees. Make sure employees feel empowered to give feedback on food waste collection practices. Post food waste data and set goals that employees can rally around so they can see they are making an impact.

## Checklist

|                          |  |                          |                              |
|--------------------------|--|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Contact ISWR                           | <input type="checkbox"/> | designate a compost champion |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Place Bins                             | <input type="checkbox"/> | train employees              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Hang Signs in Highly Visible Locations | <input type="checkbox"/> | continually asses            |

# Frequently Asked Questions

## **Why should I recover food waste?**

Rescuing food and redistributing it back into the community helps your neighbors and friends in need. What can't go to them can support farm animals that can then circle back to your table as food. What remains can then be composted and used in soil reclamation practices, preserving that landscape, we are also encouraging others to continue to visit and participate in our local economy. Teton County, WY has a very distinct natural image and composting can support what we all love about this place.

## **How much food waste can I expect my site to produce?**

Depends on your site. A good rule of thumb is to observe how much waste you are creating right and envision about 40% of that being mostly food waste. The volume of that 40% is what you want to target. Don't forget that food waste is heavy! Consider smaller bins that need to be dumped more frequently to help staff safely lift and transport waste.

## **My site has bear and other wildlife concerns. How do I minimize wildlife encounters?**

Maintain a clean and odor free environment by emptying bins regularly. Using compostable bin liners when you have to and washing bins regularly can also help minimize potential odors and avoid attracting pests. In some parts of the County, bear resistant dumpsters are required. Check with the County to find out what is required in your area. Emptying interior bins can reduce the chance of spills/leaks, prevent animal encounters, and avoid staff safety hazards. (Remember, food waste is heavy!)

## **Why is reducing contamination in food waste collection so important?**

The food waste you are collecting will be turned into compost. This compost will be applied to fields, gardens, natural areas, and other spaces we would like to keep trash free. Terra Firma will reject any loads of food waste containing contamination. If a load is contaminated, all your hard work and work of those other participating organizations along your route will go to waste.

## **How do I train my employees to learn this new diversion process?**

Face-to-face communication is best. Learning on the go will be necessary. Signage placed in easy to view areas will help food waste collection go smoothly. Training and retraining will happen early and often until the majority of staff feel comfortable and can help train on the go. Practice makes perfect!

Contact ISWR to connect about employee training and communication opportunities.

## **What do I do with compostable/biodegradable to-go ware already incorporated into my business?**

In the early phases of Teton County's program, these items will NOT be accepted to help minimize contamination and allow people to become comfortable with this new program.

Stay tuned for potential changes in acceptable items in the future.

## **Who do I contact if I have questions regarding the composting program not covered in my educational material?**

Integrated Solid Waste and Recycling

Carrie Bell

ISWRoutreach@tetoncountywy.gov

307-733-7678 (main) 307-732-5771 (direct)

# COMPOST



meat and bones



eggs and eggshells



vegetables and vegetable scraps



fruit and fruit scraps



cheese



spent grain



bread

All food and food scraps



plastic food packaging



coffee filters



sugar packets



gloves



glass food packaging



egg cartons



all liquids should be drained and soups strained



plastic and compostable service ware, including cups, plates, & coffee cups



produce stickers and rubber bands



shellfish: meat and shells

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# Food Waste



meat and bones



eggs and eggshells



vegetables and  
vegetable scraps



fruit and fruit  
scraps



bread



cheese and other dairy



grains

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CONTAMINATION

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LANDFILL



CONTAMINACIÓN

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