



Healthy Soils in the Trump Era

President Trump is making good on Candidate Trump's promise to undo Barack Obama's climate legacy. He has already been able to rescind some regulations with just the stroke of a pen, such as Obama's directive to federal agencies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. However, his intentions in continued U.S. engagement with the Paris climate agreement are still unclear. Also unclear is the direction to be taken by new Secretary of Agriculture, Sonny Perdue, regarding the importance of the role of agriculture in combatting climate change. In particular, how the new administration will rise to the challenge of addressing a need for healthy soils to enhance productivity remains to be seen.

While the changing government decides who it wants to be, national ag industry leaders are engaging in the [Soil Renaissance](#), an initiative founded by the Farm Foundation and the Samuel Roberts Noble Foundation to "advance soil health and make soil health the cornerstone of land use management decisions" and the new [Soil Health Partnership](#), a collaboration among the National Corn Growers Association, Walmart, Monsanto, The Nature Conservancy, Environmental Defense Fund, and university researchers. While neither organization are climate change enthusiasts, their members recognize that changing, unpredictable weather patterns are causing farmers challenges in many regions. You say fighting weather impacts, I say climate resiliency; either way healthier soils are a fundamental truth. **Compost! Healthy Soil, Healthy Food**, this year's theme for **International Compost Awareness Week**, helps amplify this message at a time when stakeholders at all ends of the climate and agroecology spectrum are moving towards a common goal.

Here in California, we continue to be out in front, having re-upped our long-term commitment by securing the

statutory validity of ARB's implementation of AB 32 policies beyond 2020, with SB 32, and with sequestration in soils recognized as having a key role in reversing largely unprecedented atmospheric carbon levels. Many questions still remain which will require not only a clearer understanding of the greenhouse gas benefits of removing organic resources from landfills and processing them into clean compost, but also a better education for farmers and policymakers on the benefits of compost use from the resulting increase in soil organic matter and microbial biomass.



The California Air Resources Board (CARB) is continuing their leadership in addressing climate change with the Short Lived Climate Pollutant Strategy and a Scoping Plan Update, both of which are considering the benefits of reducing methane from landfills and returning organic nutrients to the soils. CCC has continued to push for more aggressive use of compost on croplands. Our calculations cite the potential use of up to 7 million tons of compost on an incremental 80,000 acres per year of conversion, in an effort to double compost use in agriculture by 2030. This strategy will be one of many key elements necessary to meet landfill diversion targets which would have over 13 million tons of organic materials going to alternative management options by 2025.

[The Healthy Soils Initiative](#) (HSI) framework has been established by CDFA, who released the summary plan in late 2016 (in coordination with Governor's Office, Air Resources Board, CalRecycle, Department of Conservation, Department of Pesticide Regulation, Department of Water Resources, and the Water Boards), and will lead the process, directed through the

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CCC Policy Agenda

The California Compost Coalition was created in 2002 by a group of compost operators in response to demands for increased recycling of organic materials & production of clean compost, bioenergy, renewable natural gas, and biochar. We aim to increase the recycling of organic materials and further the use of clean compost as a way to: complete the Organics Recycling Loop, reduce organics in landfills, reduce GHG emissions, reduce the use of petro-based chemicals (fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides) in agriculture and landscaping, reduce water consumption, and create “green” jobs in California.

2017 PRIORITIES

Compost Infrastructure Development

- Expand scope and urgency of current AB 1045 process
- Develop State Compost Infrastructure Task Force (or similar entity) to address funding, market development, and permit streamlining. Task Force would broaden inclusive process to add local governments, other state agencies, industry, and other stakeholders in an effort to find more immediate solutions to meeting AB 1826 and SB 1383 goals.
- CalRecycle has identified the need for a minimum \$100 million in incentive funding over each of the next 5 years to stimulate infrastructure development.

Incentive Funding/Tax Exclusion

- Identify and advocate for increased funding to finance research, demonstration projects and academic studies, infrastructure and market development beyond GGRF, including increased tipping fees, generator fees, or other mechanisms.
- Continue work with State Treasurer’s CAEATFA staff to assure composting operations are afforded more reasonable opportunity to qualify for AB 199 SUT exclusion.

Government Entity Market Development

- Enforcement and expansion of existing state agency compost purchase mandates to include local governments, other state agencies, and broader organic materials categories.

Essential Public Services Determination

- Secure Legislative Counsel opinion on newly-mandated organic materials landfill-diversion facilities as “essential public services”.

Biomass Industry/Woody Waste Management

- Develop and promote biomass industry support legislation and/or additional policy options for woody waste management.

Legislation

- AB 1288 (Eggman) – Tip fee reform
- AB 1036 (McCarty) – Compost infrastructure development
- AB 1342 (Flora) – Appropriation of Greenhouse Gas Reduction Funds

[SB 780 \(Wiener\)](#)

TOPIC: This bill would authorize the Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery to promote the application of compost in urban areas of the state to assist with projects that follow the watershed approach to landscaping and, in coordination with the Department of Water Resources, to develop and implement pilot projects that support the understanding and deployment of compost to meet specified goals. The bill would also require the State Energy Resources Conservation and Development Commission, in coordination with the State Air Resources Board, to develop a greenhouse gas emissions reduction factor for new climate appropriate landscapes, as provided.

STATUS: Placed on Senate Appropriations suspense file. **SUPPORT**

[AB 1036 \(McCarty\)](#)

TOPIC: Requires the California Environmental Protection Agency, in coordination with the Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery, the State Water Resources Control Board, the State Air Resources Board, and the Department of Food and Agriculture to assess the state’s progress towards developing the organic waste processing and recycling infrastructure necessary to meet the state goals specified in existing law.

STATUS: Passed from Assembly; to Senate Rules Committee for assignment. **SUPPORT**

[AB 1288 \(Eggman\)](#)

TOPIC: This current spot bill would increase the solid waste tipping fee from \$1.40 per ton to an as-yet-to-be-determined amount to help develop organic materials processing facilities and other market incentive programs that promote the highest and best use of recovered materials. The bill may also establish a generator charge to augment the existing disposal fee which funds CalRecycle administrative costs.

STATUS: Referred to Assembly Appropriations Committee. **SUPPORT**

[AB 1342 \(Flora\)](#)

TOPIC: This bill would make moneys from the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund, upon appropriation, available to the Department of Resources Recycling And Recovery for instate organic waste and recycling projects that reduce GHGs.

STATUS: Referred to Assembly Appropriations Committee. **SUPPORT**

International Compost Awareness Week and “The Compost Story”

Compost! Healthy Soil, Healthy Food, this year’s theme for **International Compost Awareness Week**, is the underlying theme in a tremendous new video, “[The Compost Story](#)”, by Southern California-based nonprofit organization Kiss the Ground, a champion for regenerative living and the restoration of soil worldwide. This dynamic work teaches that the diversion of organic materials from landfill will not only reduce greenhouse gases but as importantly, the compost it makes feeds the soil and the microbial universe that it houses, the foundation for all life above ground. A big shout out to Zanker Recycling, parent of Z-Best Composting, and all the sponsors who helped the gifted artists at KTG bring “The Compost Story” to life. Please watch this just-released work labor of love at: <https://youtu.be/bqDQD8cvO5Y>.



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Environmental Farming Act Science Advisory Panel (EFA SAP), whose membership has been expanded by SB 859, to promote **Carbon Farming**: “*An Interagency Plan to Reduce Greenhouse Gases and Improve Drought Resiliency by Innovating Farm and Ranchland Practices*”. CDFA is currently engaged with CARB to develop a Quantification Methodology tool to measure the greenhouse gas reductions from the various practices which may be employed in the development of healthy soils.

CDFA has just concluded a public comment period regarding their framework. Following their response to the comments, CDFA plans to release a Notice of Funds available for demonstration projects and incentive projects to expend a large proportion of the \$7.5 million budgeted for HSI. These demonstration projects will provide an opportunity to provide the real-world data and information to bring CDFA to the conclusion that increased compost application warrants further development as they move forward with their plans.

In conjunction with this action plan, the EFASAP conducted the development of “[Compost Application Rates for California Croplands and Range-](#)

[lands for a CDFA Healthy Soils Incentives Program](#)”, largely a scientific literature review, which is designed to provide the initial structure under which incentive funding for compost application will be distributed from a portion of the HIS budget.

A key finding of this white paper illustrates the pressing need to increase focused research projects which can provide support for additional funding and more widespread acceptance and use of compost as a climate mitigation strategy: “**For croplands, the sub-committee determined leaching of nitrogen (in the form of nitrate) from compost to ground water to be the environmental impact of greatest concern.** Many participating growers in the CDFA Incentive Program may choose to reduce their synthetic nitrogen fertilizer applications as they gain experience with the nitrogen content in composts to minimize nitrates in surface and groundwater; however, no assumptions about such behaviors were made when developing compost application rates.” Much research, education and technical support work is needed to firm up confidence that compost is a part of the solution – and not the problem – before California can lead the way forward to making our soils great again.

AB 901 REGULATIONS

CalRecycle plans to begin the formal rulemaking process on May 16, for the development of new regulations on reporting requirements for recycling, composting, and disposal facilities, subsequent to the passage of AB 901 (Gordon). Following multiple meetings on reporting thresholds, organic materials, penalties and enforcement, multiple operations, jurisdictional requests and confidentiality, jurisdiction of origin and source sector, and material types and products, The formal rulemaking process, which will include a public 45 day comment period anticipated to begin late July to early August, 2017 and will be concluded by the end of 2017.

While we continue to assure proprietary information will be protected, a major point of contention remains regarding the reporting of source sector information, which we believe unnecessarily complicates an already onerous process and will prove difficult to implement for many operators.

2017 SCOPING PLAN UPDATE

The California Air Resources Board kicked off development of the 2030 Target Scoping Plan in October 2015 in coordination with other State agencies and has since been soliciting feedback and comments from a team of economic advisors, local air districts, community members, affected stakeholders, and the AB 32 Environmental Justice Advisory Committee at public meetings throughout the State. The proposed 2017 Climate Change Scoping Plan Update was released on January 20, 2017, Inauguration Day, sending a message to the President that California will double down on setting the greenhouse gas reduction target to 2030. CCC provided extensive testimony with CEQA comments due on April 10, 2017. CARB plans to adopt the Scoping Plan and certify CEQA at their June 23, 2017 meeting in Sacramento. The Proposed Plan is available here: https://www.arb.ca.gov/cc/scopingplan/2030sp_pp_final.pdf

Ventura Carbon Project

The California Compost Coalition is a registered Lobbying Coalition with the Fair Political Practices Commission (FPPC), created in 2002 by a group of compost operators in response to demands for increased recycling of organic materials & production of clean compost, bioenergy, renewable natural gas, and biochar.

CCC Members

Agromin
Atlas Disposal
Burrtec Waste Industries
Caglia Environmental
California Wood Recycling
CleanFleets.net
Clover Flat Compost
Cold Canyon Compost
GreenWaste Recovery
Harvest Tulare
Harvest Lathrop
Marin Sanitary Service
Mt. Diablo Recycling
Napa Recycling Compost
Northern Recycling Compost
Organic Waste Solutions
Phoenix Energy
Quackenbush Mt. Compost
Recology Blossom Valley Organics
Recology Feather River Organics
Recology Jepson Prairie Organics
ReFuel Energy Partners
Soiland Co, Inc.
Sonoma Compost
Tracy Delta Compost
Upper Valley Recycling
Vision Recycling
Zanker Road Resource Management
Z-Best Compost Facility
Zero Waste Energy Development
Zero Waste Energy, LLC

CCC Executive Committee

Bill Camarillo, *Agromin*
Greg Kelley, *Northern Recycling Compost*
Eric Potashner, *Recology*
Greg Pryor, *Recology*
Will Bakx, *Sonoma Compost*
Christy Pestoni Abreu, *UVR Compost*
Michael Gross, *Z-Best Compost*

CCC Team

Neil Edgar, Executive Director
Evan Edgar, Regulatory Affairs
Steve Peterson, Financial Advisor
Rick Moore, Peer Review Engineer
Monica White, Sustainability Advisor
Sean Edgar, Fleet Advisor

CCC Legislative Affairs

Justin Malan, EcoConsult
Neil Edgar, Edgar & Associates Inc.

Agromin is a pioneer in the sustainable management of biodegradable resources and is headquartered in Ventura County, serving Southern California with several composting facilities. Agromin is a founding member of the California Compost Coalition and is dedicated to the enhancement of our industry, our society, and the environment through innovation at each turn of the recycling loop. Agromin has been carbon farming for decades and will be kicking off the Ventura Carbon Project in 2017.

Each year, Agromin converts almost 500,000 tons of recycled organic materials into rich living compost, mulch, and other premium soil products for area farmers, landscapers and gardeners. Resulting from this process of sustainably renewing our soil resources, Agromin contributes to water conservation, prevention of soil depletion, reduction in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and a decreased need for oil-based fertilizers and chemicals.

Agriculture is the largest customer for Agromin's composted organic products. California has 30 million acres of farmland and almost 8 million acres in harvested crops. The "Certified Organic" label has increased awareness and opportunities for California farmers to use organic products such as those from Agromin that are made from urban compost. Using renewable organic materials, recycling completes an urban-to-agriculture loop that helps meet growers' commitments to "sustainability" – balancing the very real needs for housing and for environmental protection.

For cities and communities surrounded by agriculture or with pockets of agriculture within, an urban-to-agriculture program may be the true solution for helping recycle green materials and assisting agriculture with sustainable carbon farming methods. Our Ventura County partner exemplifying this balance is the Limoneira Company ([Download Limoneira/Agromin Case Study pdf](#)) which has hosted our compost facility for over 10 years.

Agromin is currently conducting a research project on the use of Biochar in the covered aerated static pile process to minimize emissions and odors. Agromin works with the University of California Cooperation Extension in Ventura, and other experts, on using compost for several other agricultural applications in Ventura County. Agromin has teamed with Cool Planet Energy Systems, also of Ventura County, in using Biochar for many agricultural applications. [CoolTerra™](#) is a multi-functional soil amendment for enhancing plant and soil vitality with applications in horticulture, turf and landscape, viticulture, row crops, fruit and nut trees, and composting. CoolTerra™ is highly porous, acting like a sponge to retain water and nutrients at a plant's root zone, increasing water use efficiency and reducing the need for fertilizer. Its pore structure and chemistry provides surfaces where beneficial soil microbes can attach and flourish. Enhancing the microbe population in the soil increases the ability of the plant to uptake nutrients, resulting in larger and healthier plants.

Agromin has tested compost and Biochar substrates on strawberries to replace methyl bromide with a much safer organic products. Agromin has developed compost substrates for use in raspberries that have significantly increased yields with substantially reduced water usage. Agromin is continuing its work with the Limoneira Company on the bio filtration of their wastewater and the use of Biochar to remove chlorides.

While it may be too late to save agriculture in Orange and Los Angeles counties, agriculture in Ventura County is worth saving because of its untapped potential. The Ventura Carbon Project goal is to realize the full potential of agriculture by increasing yields, decreasing water use with compost and Biochar use that will sequester the carbon for generations while building healthy soils.