

FAQs Regarding Ban on Compostable Foodware at CSWD's Green Mountain Compost Facility

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Q. Can I continue to use the certified compostable products I've already purchased?

A: Yes (and no). Certified compostable foodware will be accepted and composted at Green Mountain Compost (GMC) **until January 1, 2022**. After that, you may choose to continue using those products, but you may no longer send them to GMC and will need to dispose of them as trash.

Q. Can I continue to buy, sell, or distribute compostable products beyond Jan 1, 2022?

A. Yes. This is not a change in the law, it is a change in the acceptance policy at CSWD's Green Mountain Compost facility. Businesses may buy, sell, and use compostable products as they see fit. CSWD requires only that businesses using those products appropriately collect them as trash and educate their customers that they are NOT accepted in the GMC compost stream by the time the new policy takes effect.

Q. Why has GMC accepted compostable foodware up to this point?

A. CSWD has recognized that compostable foodware helps Chittenden County businesses, institutions and events comply with Vermont's requirement to keep food scraps out of the trash. We have also encouraged use of compostable foodware as a means for events to achieve "zero-waste-to-landfill" status. Compostable foodware is an effective vehicle for capturing food that would otherwise end up in the landfill, but the products themselves have never been a desirable feedstock for making compost and have always posed problems for our composting operation.

Q. How will CSWD help me re-educate my customers?

A. We know this is a big change. That's why we're making sure you know about this now, with nearly a year of advance notice, and why we welcome your input on the best ways to help you notify and educate your customers and staff. We will do our part to share this information with media outlets, in our monthly newsletter, on our social media channels and elsewhere so your customers are hearing about it from us via multiple channels.

Well in advance of the 1/1/22 policy change, we will be offering updated decals and printed materials to help you and your customers redirect foodware that will no longer be accepted in the compost stream. CSWD offers [matching grants](#) to help businesses reduce costs associated with changing or

improving infrastructure to help ensure effective sorting and collection of trash, recyclables and accepted compostable materials.

Q. Won't this change result in more material going to the landfill?

A. In some cases, yes, which is why we did not make this change lightly. This policy change is necessary to ensure we can continue to provide Chittenden County residents and businesses an outlet to keep thousands of tons of food scraps and leaves out of the landfill every year without bankrupting the compost operation.

Q. Wouldn't more education be a better solution?

A: We know from our own as well as other composters' experience that education alone cannot solve the contamination problem. We also recognize that the acceptance policy change will not eliminate contamination at Green Mountain Compost. We will continue to provide support and comprehensive educational outreach to our businesses and residents to minimize contamination.

Q. What are my options if I want to make environmentally responsible choices?

A. We encourage everyone to consider ways to reduce or discontinue reliance on single-use products wherever possible by moving toward durable foodware that can be washed and reused when possible and to look for products that contain recycled content and can be recycled when reuse is not possible.

Q. Are there other compost facilities in the area that will accept compostable products?

A. We are not aware of any other compost facilities in the region that accept compostable products.

Q. Is there any benefit to using compostable foodware if it's going to the landfill?

A. What happens to a product at the end of its life is only one factor in its overall environmental impact. Life-cycle analysis of product impacts is continuously evolving, but [research and analysis by Oregon's Department of Environmental Quality](#) has found that compostable foodware often has a larger lifetime environmental footprint than non-compostable items. Garbage and litter are perhaps the most obvious ways in which packaging impacts the environment. But impacts "upstream" of the consumer, in raw materials extraction, manufacturing, and transportation, may be equally, if not more, significant. Compostable materials may require more fossil energy use, release more greenhouse gases, or result in more ecological toxins than their non-compostable counterparts, mostly due to how they're made.

Q. With the single use plastic ban and now not being able to use compostable products, what options does the business sector have to comply with the law?

A. This change does not affect options available to businesses for complying with [Vermont's Single-Use Products Law](#). (See link for details.)

Q. I've been using compostable straws since the ban on plastic straws went into effect. What am I supposed to use now?

A: The [Single-Use Products Law](#) does not ban plastic straws. *It requires that they not be automatically provided.* Preventing needless product consumption always beats providing a product that isn't needed, regardless of what that product is made from or how it will be disposed.

Q. How will this impact requirements for food scrap collection at events?

A: Under Vermont's Act 148, events will still be required to have a system in place for keeping food scraps separate from trash and make a good faith effort to inform staff, vendors, and attendees about how they can participate. At most events it will be adequate to have an effective system to capture pre-consumer food waste (scraps generated behind the scenes during food preparation), since post-consumer food waste is likely to be minimal. If considerable post-consumer food waste is anticipated—when serving things like corn on the cob, chicken wings, or watermelon slices, for example—events must make a good faith effort to keep those materials out of the trash. Placing food scraps containers near those food vendors or having signage at the point of sale telling people where to put their food waste (separate from trash) will continue to be best practices.

Q. If compostable products are so bad, why are you still accepting certified compostable liner bags?

A: We recognize the huge importance that liner bags play in the process of transporting food scraps on their journey from kitchens to compost facilities. We encourage residents to use newspaper or plain paper bags as alternative liners and we would prefer not to receive compostable plastic liners when they are not essential. When you do choose to use certified compostable liner bags, we require that they are clearly labeled as such.

Please send your questions to info@cswd.net. We will update this document and add the information to www.cswd.net in the coming months.