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NEWS

For Immediate Release

Organics-to-Energy Pilot Program in San Mateo County to reduce waste bound for landfills and produce clean energy

The County of San Mateo and the South Bayside Waste Management Authority, also known as RethinkWaste, are collaborating to further reduce the amount of waste being sent to landfills by converting organics into a clean energy source.

“Organics-to-Energy” is the name of a new pilot project that will test the use of an Organics Extrusion Press (OREX) at the Shoreway Environmental Center in San Carlos. The OREX will extract between 50 and 75 tons of organic material per day from the waste stream that would be otherwise destined for landfills and composting facilities. The organic material becomes a slurry that will be converted into a clean gas by the East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD) as a renewable energy source.

“We receive over 221,000 tons of garbage annually at the Shoreway Environmental Center. About 30% of this material is still made up of organic material. This pilot project will help move these materials out of the landfill and create a clean energy source for our operations,” said RethinkWaste Executive Director Joe La Mariana. “The County and RethinkWaste continue to lead the way in a unique, innovative partnership in our industry.”

If successful, the Organics-to-Energy pilot will demonstrate the potential for a larger scale project with the capacity to extract an estimated 200 tons per day of organic material from the landfill waste stream. The total cost of the pilot project is estimated to be \$5 million from three sources; CalRecycle, the State’s Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery, will fund \$3 million, and RethinkWaste will contribute \$1.25 million. The County of San Mateo will contribute the remaining \$1 million from grant funding designated for waste reduction and recycling programs as well as hazardous waste handling programs. If the pilot is successful, additional equipment will be purchased to expand the project.

“This type of innovation benefits our communities today with cleaner air and over the long term by reducing our county’s reliance on landfills,” said Supervisor Carole Groom. “Using our resources wisely begins with reducing and composting food waste at home and is complimented by creative technologies like this.”

The RethinkWaste Board of Directors approved the pilot project at its November 15 meeting, CalRecycle finalized its \$3 million grant on April 30, and the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors approved its funding contribution at its June 4 meeting. Installation of the OREX began in March 2019 and is anticipated to begin operating in December 2019.

“On behalf of the SBWMA Board of Directors and the Zero Waste Committee, which we formed in order to put San Mateo County on the forefront of waste reduction and recycling, we are deeply thankful to the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors for supporting our innovative pilot project to reduce organic waste and diminish greenhouse gases,” said Michael Brownrigg, Burlingame Councilmember and Chairman of the SBWMA Zero Waste Committee.

The San Mateo County Office of Sustainability strives to improve the sustainability of the County’s operations and the greater community through work in areas of renewable energy and energy efficiency; resource conservation; alternative transportation; and greenhouse gas emission reductions. Join us at www.twitter.com/SustainSMC

RethinkWaste is a regional solid waste joint powers authority of twelve public agencies (Atherton, Belmont, Burlingame, East Palo Alto, Foster City, Hillsborough, Menlo Park, Redwood City, San Carlos, San Mateo, the County of San Mateo and the West Bay Sanitary District) in San Mateo County, California and is a leader in the delivery of innovative waste reduction and recycling programs. RethinkWaste owns and manages the award-winning Shoreway Environmental Center in San Carlos which receives all the recyclables, organic materials, and solid waste collected in its service area. For more information, please visit www.RethinkWaste.org or follow them at www.Facebook.com/rethinkwaste or www.Twitter.com/rethinkwaste.