

Ohio seeks to boost food waste recovery

By Jim Johnson

Ohio wants to take a bite out of its food waste stream.

With food waste recovery hovering at about 3 percent in the state, the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency sees an opportunity to push disposal rates lower by promoting a food composting initiative now in its formative stages.

Food waste — when compared to other recyclables — has a long way to go to catch up to their recovery rates.

Paper recycling rates are now more than 50 percent in the United States, and yard waste enjoys a 62 percent recovery rate, the Ohio EPA said.

“The food scraps are one of the parts of the waste stream that hasn’t been recovered very well,” said Angel Arroyo-Rodriguez, an environmental specialist at the Ohio EPA who is working on the fledgling program.

An initial step to reach out to citizens and business owners was the creation of a Web site to promote food waste management in the state. The plan is to bring stakeholders — generators and processors — together this fall to start discussing how to advance the cause.

The agency plans to contact trade associations, including those representing meat processors, grocers and restaurants,

to ask representatives to attend stakeholder meetings.

Arroyo-Rodriguez points to food waste management programs in other parts of the country and says the Ohio EPA sees potential to make a dent in the waste stream within its borders. “It’s been gaining momentum around the nation,” he said.

The idea also is being bolstered by the fact that a small number of schools in the state already are operating their own food waste recycling programs.

The Ohio EPA wants to act as a facilitator between generators of food waste and those who can process the material.

“We’re initially trying to promote it with the large generators so there is more of a stable source [of waste],” Arroyo-Rodriguez said.

Food waste represents about 11.7 percent of the total waste stream, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. That compares with 12.1 percent for yard trimmings and 35.2 percent for paper.

Ohio households throw away an estimated average of 474 pounds of food waste each year, or enough to cover a football field with 1,450 feet of such material, the Ohio EPA said.

Paygro, located near South Charleston, Ohio, is the largest food waste processor in the state. Paygro receives material from Dole Fresh Vegetables and Whole



BEFORE & AFTER: Ohio has launched a program to promote food waste recovery. Above, food waste and compost are displayed at Paygro in South Charleston, Ohio. JIM JOHNSON

Foods. The company recently installed a new grinding system that allows the composting operation to take in additional waste from additional sources.

More information about the state’s new

program is available at www.epa.state.oh.us/food_scraps.html. ■

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HP sets billion-pound goal for e-waste

By Joe Truini

Hewlett-Packard Co. is going for another billion.

But it’s not another billion in profit or even revenue. The Palo Alto, Calif.-based electronics firm has set a new target to recycle and reuse a billion pounds of electronic scrap by the end of 2010.

“Environmental responsibility is



GE to help revive closed plant in Ill.

By Joe Truini

General Electric Corp. is working with Robbins Community Power to resurrect a mothballed Chicago-area waste-to-energy plant with a troubled past.

The duo is converting the facili-

tions by the end of the first quarter 2008, said Ed Kalebich, chief operating officer for Robbins Community Power.

The Robbins, Ill., plant, originally designed to convert municipal solid waste into electricity, opened in 1987 but was closed