

Composting program, acquisition prime hauler for growth

Published on 11/20/2014 - 10:33 am

Written by Ben Keller

0 Comments



Mid Valley Disposal unveiled its new organics recycling bins at The Big Fresno Fair this year. Food vendors were provided with a green bin to toss their food waste during the fair's 13-day run. Through the effort, 141 tons of organic waste was diverted from going to the landfill. While not yet in full swing, Mid Valley Disposal's new composting operation is turning the Central Valley on to the possibilities of organic material recycling.

Driven by new regulations on the disposal of green waste in the state's landfills, the Kerman-based waste hauler and recycler completed work earlier this year on the first row of a 68,000 square-foot composting field at its 10-acre material recovery facility west of Fresno.

The new program comes as the company doubles in size with the recent acquisition of competing hauler Sunset Waste in Fresno.

Designed by W.L. Gore & Associate's of Delaware, the GORE in-vessel organic composting system features a special laminate membrane that retains methane, volatile organic compounds and other gases normally emitted through traditional composting.

In addition, the setup comes with in-floor aeration, aeration blowers and oxygen and temperature sensors, creating a heated and controlled environment that allows microbes to kill pathogens and speeds up the break down of organic material.

"On a traditional windrow system, it takes 90 days," said Mid Valley Disposal's General Manager Joseph Kalpakoff.

“We can get finished composting in eight weeks.”

With one of 16 rows already in place, Kalpakoff said the system is the first of its kind in California, satisfying the state’s stringent air quality regulations while also producing a fertilizer the company can customize depending on the use.

“You can come out with different batches every time,” he said. “They spread it on soil and it provides nutrients to whatever ag crop they’re farming and it’s definitely more drought tolerant.”

Although much of the raw material comes from food scraps, Kalpakoff said yard trimmings, animal waste and even paper products can also be thrown into the mix.

Mid Valley Disposal kicked off its organic recycling program in April, with the first hauls coming from commercial customers in Fresno, where an estimated 35 percent of the waste stream is composed of readily recyclable food waste materials.

In addition to its garbage and recycling collection service, the company has around 35 businesses signed up with bins to toss their food and green waste, with the company pulling in an average of 15 tons of food waste a week to its Kerman facility.

The Fresno Chaffee Zoo is among the largest customers right now, while a few hotels and restaurants are also generating a lot of food scraps for the operation.

Kalpakoff said the service — also offered in Huron, Mendota and Kerman — provides cost savings to customers in addition to educating the public about the importance of recycling.

In Fresno, he said, a one-cubic yard bin for garbage is available for \$31.50 a week compared to \$24.36 for the new two-cubic yard organic waste bin.

“If you’re a restaurant and half your waste is food waste, and you fill a two-cubic yard bin a few times a week and you can reduce your waste, you’re going to save a lot of money,” Kalpakoff said.

He added that the organics dumpsters are also lighter and easier to maneuver than the traditional metal garbage bins. Plus, they’re easier to clean and last longer.

Word got out recently about Mid Valley’s organics program during the Big Fresno Fair when 48 food vendors were provided with a green bin to toss their food waste during the fair’s 13-day run. Through the effort, 141 tons of organic waste was diverted from going to the landfill.

The service, free to vendors as part of Mid Valley’s waste collection contract with the Big Fresno Fair, was also implemented in the Livestock and Fur & Feathers areas of the grounds.

In July, Mid Valley Disposal collected organic waste during the Fresno Food Expo held at the Fresno Convention Center.

“We came out and shared with large manufactures and showed them that there’s an outlet for the organics waste stream,” Kalpakoff said.

Besides businesses, Mid Valley’s organic collection service is also being offered to residential customers in a few of its contracted municipalities.

The organics composting operation, which will divert some 75,000 tons of organic waste annually when fully implemented, is part of a larger expansion Mid Valley began earlier this year to triple its existing 10-acre operation in Kerman.

That effort will continue next year after the company finds a vendor to build an 8-bay anaerobic digester to break down organic waste in a closed-pressure vessel free of oxygen.

Other planned additions include a new 44,000 square-foot receiving building, expanding the material recovery facility by 34,000 square feet, adding back-down transfer ramps for the receiving buildings and installation of a compressed natural gas fuel dispenser.

The end goal, Kalpakoff said, is to increase the site's permitted waste capacity from 500 tons per day currently to 1,500 tons. Project plans anticipate 850 tons handled per day at the expanded facility by 2016, or 418,600 tons that year.

Along with that expansion, Mid Valley Disposal recently finalized its purchase of competing waste hauler Sunset Waste.

The acquisition brings Mid Valley another 65 collection vehicles and two receiving and transfer stations in Fresno and Visalia, along with Sunset's 13 franchise agreements, nine of them for municipalities.

"It significantly increases our footprint in the Valley," he said. "It allows us to be a more of a regional company moving into the future."

Kalpakoff said the move also helps customers comply with AB 341, a law requiring businesses that generate four or more cubic yards of garbage to recycle with the goal of diverting at least 75 percent of California's solid waste away from landfills.

The organics collection program, meanwhile, puts the Valley in a better position when AB 1826 goes into effect, he said. The law, passed by Governor Jerry Brown in September, requires businesses that generate a lot of food scraps or yard debris to sign up for recycling of this material beginning in 2016.

[inShare](#)