

FY 2016 PROGRAM WORK TEAM ANNUAL REPORT

Recycling Agricultural Plastics Program

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Accomplishments over the past year

Delaware County, the focus of a 2015 PWT meeting, was judged to be reasonably sustainable as long as markets remain stable. The Department of Solid Waste has a strong commitment to diverting all potentially recyclable materials, including agricultural plastics. Cornell Cooperative Extension continues to supply the outreach and education. The program has been very successful with over 50% of the used agricultural plastics being collected and recycled. Solid Waste has also committed to supporting Madison County Department of Solid Waste in their efforts to initiate a plastics to fuel technology.

Madison County: multiple meetings were held in the county in the interest of obtaining a plastics to fuel facility to process hard to recycle plastics, particularly ag plastics. RAPP identified several companies that submitted proposals for locating plastics to oil facility at the county landfill, including Golden Renewable Energy which RAPP and county officials met with on March 21. The county subsequently turned down all proposals for plastics to oil and will pursue plastics to fuel (gaseous) technology that is compatible with the landfill gas used for generating electricity. Meetings were held June 13 and July 21 between Madison County staff, SUNY Cobleskill researchers and RAPP.

Jefferson/Lewis/St. Lawrence Counties have had strong RAPP efforts but only Lewis County (SWCD) has been able to continue. Discussions were initiated with DANC (Development Authority of the North Country) which operates the regional landfill. DANC staff are well aware of RAPP and have supported earlier efforts. They also did an informal study of ag plastics being received at the landfill and realized it is more than they were aware of. As of November 2016. DANC took possession of one of the two balers that were available, the DEC contract is pending. Diversion efforts will be focused on collection in the individual counties.

Otsego County has a well-established partnership between Otsego County Solid Waste (Planning Department), the Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), Otsego County Conservation Association (OCCA) and Casella Resource Solutions. Casella was the county waste hauler and recently won the county recycling contract. Sustainability of RAPP requires integration with local solid waste, public and private. Multiple meetings, now mostly online, are ongoing to generate the most efficient collection system. A

combination of on-farm baling of used plastics and periodic spring and fall collections at transfer stations is being used.

Wyoming County: with approximately 50% of the ag plastics being recycled from the county's dairy farms and no solid waste infrastructure, the RAPP effort is very tenuous. The previous employee responsible for baling plastics on-farm fully retired late in the winter and a new employee was brought on board. A meeting of local staff, and new baler operator, Rich Downs, along with agriculture program leader was held on June 9.

Columbia County and surrounding counties: while there has been interest in recycling agricultural plastics in the Hudson Valley, solid waste resources have been lacking. A new interest has been generated in the Columbia County area, largely due to larger producers of used agricultural plastic. This has been facilitated by Cornell Cooperative Extension staff, Columbia County and regional. Columbia County Solid Waste would like to be supportive but lacks the resources. After a great deal of phone and email discussion, a PWT meeting was held in Valatie including 5 large producers of used agricultural plastics, RAPP, Extension, Solid Waste and Ultra-Poly, a larger recycler of ag plastics that is interested in the specific plastics being generated by these producers. The producers were able to generate a plan to collect and ship their backlog of used plastics to Ultra-Poly in lieu of Solid Waste being able to assist them. This does not address ongoing and future collection, particularly for smaller producers, but relieves some of the larger volumes that have been stockpiled. RAPP often finds that agricultural producers in NY are ahead of the curve in their interest to recycled used material as compared to a county's ability to collect and recycle. This motivation comes from the large volumes that agriculture generates. The Hudson valley will be getting the last available Baler and it will likely be housed in Orange or Ulster. There is collection of boat plastic in Westchester County and market potential is a bit better.

The RAPP program is no longer funded. CWMI staff are working to tie up loose ends so that plastic that is being collected in counties can still be recycled as long as the agencies in place are committed. There is no longer funding that goes to the counties, however in the long run, the balers will be owned by the counties where they are located.