



Microbes reduce tons of food waste into compost

50 cents

Compost facility plans to expand its operations

Continued from Page D1

Walla Walla officials, an agreement was made to build a single facility on the prison grounds, Johnson said.

"It took a lot of faith on the part of the city to commit its (part) of the matching funds," she noted.

While conventional outdoor "static piles" hand some of the food waste along with yard waste, leaves and other plant material, the majority of the food waste is composted in the closed vessels manufactured by Engineered Compost Systems.

The "containerized" composters feature computer-controlled monitoring and aeration systems that cut down the time needed to compost a load of waste from 100 days to about 44 days.

"For food waste, this is about as high tech as it gets," said Russ Davis of Organix, which markets the compost produced by the facility.

"Food waste by its nature is a big problem because it's a vector for rats, bugs, flies, etc.," Davis said. The closed vessel system eliminates those problems, as well as obnoxious smells.

The containers combined can handle about 4,300 tons of waste per year, while the static piles are set up to handle about 3,000 tons of waste. Roughly speaking, about one ton of material produces about two cubic yards of compost, Harvey said.

Plans call for the facility to eventually handle all of the food waste produced by the prison, about two tons a day, as well as possibly taking in food waste from local school districts and other sources.

The penitentiary is working on a system to make sure food waste from institution kitchens is separated from

HOURS OF OPERATION

The transfer station for the Walla Walla Regional Compost Facility, located on State Route 125 north of the Washington State Penitentiary, is open from noon to 6 p.m. Tuesday through Thursday and from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Friday and Saturday. It is closed Sunday and Monday.

FEES AND PRICES

A tipping fee of \$3.50 per cubic yard is charged to drop-off yard waste. A cubic yard is about the capacity of a compact pickup truck, while full-sized pickups will hold about 2 1/2 cubic yards. Compost from the facility is available for about \$30 per cubic yard.

other waste so it can go straight into the composters without anyone having to sort out non-food items.

"The whole idea is to get the trucks going both ways," one full of waste going to the composters and one full of compost heading to a buyer," Davis said.

Andy Porter can be reached at aporters@ubullet.com or by calling 525-3300, ext. 282.

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10/13

Walla Walla Regional Compost Facility ...

Cooking ALONG

Officially opened at the Washington State Penitentiary in April, the operation is starting to achieve its full potential.

By ANDY PORTER
 of the Union-Bulletin

Four of the quietest trash mashers in the world are at work these days at the Washington State Penitentiary.

Inside the four aluminum-clad containers billions of microbes are reducing tons of food waste into compost. But from the outside, there's no hint of what's happening within.

"This smells better than a hog farm," Steve Harvey said with a grin.

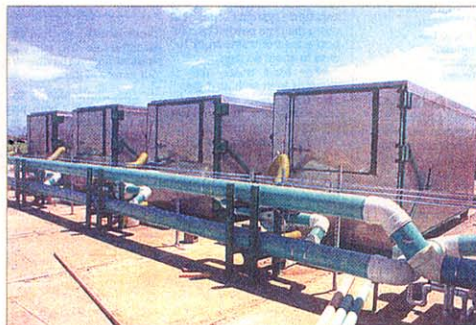
The former hog farm Harvey was referring to is now the site of the new Walla Walla Regional Compost Facility. Officially opened in April, the operation is starting to achieve its full potential, with plans for future expansion.

Under the direction of Harvey, the Correctional Industries resource recovery coordinator, the facility is taking in about a ton of food waste a day from the prison, along with yard waste and other organic material delivered to its drop-off yard on State Route 125 north of the penitentiary.

Construction of the compost site was accomplished after the city of Walla Walla and Correctional Industries authorities agreed to pool state Department of Ecology grants and matching funds to build the facility.

Walla Walla County Regional Waste Reduction and Recycling also helped coordinate the project, which totaled \$709,645 in grants and matching funds.

When the grants were announced in 2002, "the original plan was to have two separate facilities, one for food waste at the penitentiary and the second for yard and leaf waste at the Sudbury (Road)



Four containerized composters turn food waste into compost. Using computerized sensors and controls, the containers speed up the composting process without inviting unwanted pests such as bugs, birds or animals.



landfill," said Sharon Johnson, Walla Walla County Waste Reduction and Recycling coordinator.

But with the backing of penitentiary Superintendent Dick Morgan and city of

Please see **COMPOST, D2**



Above, Steve Harvey, left, and Russ Davis of Organix, talk about the composting business at the new Walla Walla Regional Composting Facility. Davis is in charge of marketing the compost produced to consumers, commercial interests and government agencies.