



NEWS RELEASE

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VERMONT

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NORTHERN VERMONT COMPOSTING PARTNERSHIP, GOVERNOR DOUGLAS AND USDA RURAL DEVELOPMENT CELEBRATE EARTH DAY

Montpelier, VT – April 24, 2007: Governor Jim Douglas and Curtis Anderson, Deputy Administrator for USDA Rural Development Rural Utilities Programs, joined the Northern Vermont Composting Partnership to celebrate Earth Day and to introduce the Partnership's new Food Waste Recycling program.

Highfields Institute, a member of the Northern Vermont Composting Partnership, applied for and received a \$100,000 Solid Waste Management Grant from USDA Rural Development to institute a process for collecting food waste from local schools, businesses and restaurants. The food wastes are collected and brought to the Highfields Institute's West Hill Farm Compost Demonstration and Research Site.

"The Northern Vermont Composting Partnership is a collaboration between Highfields and three of the solid waste districts to provide food scrap diversion/ recovery services to local businesses and schools, while also using the program as an opportunity to refine the program model, explore and better understand the economics of rural food scrap collection and hauling programs, and develop Best Management Practices for farm-scale composters handling food scraps," said Tom Gilbert, Program Director at Highfields Institute. "Understanding the nuances of these programs intimately and addressing the challenges they can present is critical to replicating these programs effectively around the state to reclaim and integrate these materials into sustainable food systems."

"The first Earth Day was held on April 22, 1970. It was held to bring to the forefront, environmental issues," said Anderson. "Thirty seven years later, we are still celebrating Earth Day, not only are we talking about the environment, we are taking positive steps to save the environment. This project, diverting up to 200 tons of food waste from the landfills, is what Earth Day is all about."

The program is expected to serve seven schools and approximately fifteen businesses within the next year, setting up their food waste recycling programs. Schools and businesses are provided with training, 48 gallon totes with lids and wheels, and free hauling. Central Vermont Solid Waste Management has taken on the responsibility of hauling the food waste from the schools and businesses to the Highfields Institute West Hill Compost Demonstration and Research Site. The food waste is expected to produce roughly 350 yards of compost. Educational curriculum components will be available to the participating schools and will then be shared on the web with teachers everywhere.

“In Vermont, every day is Earth Day, as we all recognize the vital importance of our natural environment, and the role it plays in our way of life,” Governor Douglas said. “This is an important opportunity to remind ourselves that Vermont’s actions can continue to lead the rest of the region toward more responsible stewardship of our natural resources.”

The Highfields Institute was conceived in 1999 by former dairy farmer Tod Delaricheliere. After successfully composting dairy manure for four years on his family’s farm, Tod aspired to provide assistance to other local dairy farmers in composting their manure and realizing the benefits of composting. Over the last 7 years, Highfields Institute has continued Tod's efforts, targeting dairy farmers and promoting their use of on-farm composting as a manure management practice. The Highfields Institute is dedicated to the preservation and quality of Vermont’s agricultural soils, watersheds, and agricultural economies through on-farm composting. They research and teach on-farm composting, as well as explore strategic management questions impeding its widespread use. Highfields aims to help our youth, farmers, farm organizations, businesses and government agencies understand the benefits of composting and compost utilization. The Highfields Institute is resolved to help Vermont sustain family farming practices, as well as local agricultural businesses and economic systems, that promote soil and water quality thus protecting public health.

“On-farm composting provides a simple approach to managing organic materials like food residuals, livestock manures, and livestock mortalities to maximize their reuse for building agricultural soils, while also creating additional benefits such as, farm income diversification and cost off-sets, reducing field erosion and nutrient leaching, improving crop production, and reducing solid waste,” said Gilbert. “Programs that connect farmers to the businesses and schools in our rural communities that generate food scraps provide an efficient approach to diverting these materials from the landfill and capturing this resource for agricultural regeneration, economically, agronomically and ecologically.”

USDA Rural Development's mission is to deliver programs in a way that will support increasing economic opportunity and improve the quality of life of rural residents. Rural Development provides equity and technical assistance to finance and foster growth in homeownership, business development, and critical community and technology infrastructure. Since 2001, USDA Rural Development has invested \$39,541,490 in Carroll County. Further information on rural programs is available at a local USDA Rural Development office or by visiting USDA's web site at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/vt>