



KERN COUNTY WASTE MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT

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March 24, 2015

Board of Supervisors
Kern County Administrative Center
1115 Truxtun Avenue
Bakersfield, CA 93301

REPORT CONCERNING 2015 KERN COUNTY ORGANICS DIVERSION STRATEGY (ALL S.D.'s)

(Fiscal Impact: None [FY 2014-15]; \$1,615,000 [FY 2015-16 Estimate]; Solid Waste Enterprise Fund; Budgeted; Discretionary)

Attached for your Board's consideration is the *2015 Kern County Organics Diversion Strategy*. The Waste Management Department is always watchful for changes to the regulatory and business environment and adjusting as necessary to keep the County's Integrated Waste Management System competitive and useful to our customers. The Department has become aware that organic waste management is the next big challenge and has developed this plan to address the organic processing challenge.

On September 28, 2014, AB 1826, Mandatory Commercial Organic Recycling was passed. AB 1826, Mandatory Commercial Organic Recycling requires businesses to recycle/compost organic waste and defines compostable organics as *food waste, green waste, landscape and pruning waste, wood waste and food-soiled paper waste that is mixed in with food waste*. While vegetative food waste can be traditionally composted along with green waste and wood waste, protein based food waste such as meat, fish, chicken and eggs can create odor issues and compromise quality when composted if not carefully managed.

Over the last 25 years, the recycling, composting and disposal infrastructure in Kern County has become truly integrated, and is poised to expand and evolve to meet the legislative mandates of AB 1826. The Department believes it is in the best interests of the public to enhance existing organic programs more fully. By providing centrally located green waste processing for self-haul and residential curbside green waste collection, the County can achieve cost-effective organic processing and diversion for both residential and commercial customers.

Countywide, 72% of households currently have access to curbside green waste collection. Several Kern County cities are facing mounting pressure from CalRecycle to seriously tackle curbside residential green waste or face compliance orders and need access to centrally located, cost effective programs. Curbside green waste collection programs are also planned for certain Universal Collection Areas. With the passage of AB 1826, both city haulers and franchise haulers will ultimately need to develop commercial organic collection routes and will need access to organic composting facilities.



Winner of local, state and national awards for innovation and efficiency.

Given the increasing statewide demand and competition for composting capacity, the County cannot assume and depend on private facilities providing cost-effective composting capacity for the entire compostable organic waste stream in the County. Fortunately, the Mount Vernon Green Waste Facility and existing County solid waste infrastructure is suited to meet this demand as needed. The Department proposes to work with our partners and continue to research and analyze options to best meet the food waste diversion challenge.

The *2015 Kern County Organics Diversion Strategy* proposes the following recommendations:

- Expand green waste processing and screening at the Shafter-Wasco, Bena and Mojave-Rosamond Landfills.
- Develop full composting capability in the short term at the Shafter-Wasco Integrated Waste Management Facility.
- Continue to work with the City of Bakersfield to accept material from residential curbside green waste at the Mt. Vernon Green Waste Facility and at designated Kern County facilities at no charge; the cost of processing and diversion will be considered to be covered under the Land Use Fee and be paid for by the Solid Waste Enterprise Fund.

These recommendations will promote organics recycling, will strengthen the Solid Waste Enterprise Fund, and are consistent with the transition from an emphasis on solid waste disposal to a confirmation of integrated waste management. While the cost of green waste diversion and composting will be a net increase, the potential loss of Land Use Fee revenue would be a greater financial impact to the Solid Waste Enterprise Fund. The 15-Year Financial Forecast analysis concludes that no rate increase will be required to implement the above recommendations until Fiscal Year 22/23, with three years of CPI based increases estimated. Additional State regulations or requirements may trigger increased expenditures and could further impact rates. A full explanation of estimated costs and rate impacts are included in the attached report.

The Solid Waste Management Advisory Committee, serving as the Local Task Force, reviewed and concurred with the proposed *2015 Kern County Organics Diversion Strategy* on February 6, 2015.

The County Administrative Office is aware of this request.

Therefore, **IT IS RECOMMENDED** that your Board approve and adopt the *2015 Kern County Organics Diversion Strategy*.

Sincerely,



Douglas E. Landon
Director

2015 Kern County Organics Diversion Strategy



March 24, 2015



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

BACKGROUND	1
REGULATION AND LEGISLATION	1
EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE AND PROGRAMS	2
FUNDING AND PROGRAM CONSIDERATIONS.....	3
DEVELOPMENT AND EXPANSION OF GREEN WASTE PROCESSING AND COMPOSTING	5
GREEN WASTE EXPANSION PROGRAM SERVICES	5
GREEN WASTE EXPANSION PROGRAM COSTS	6
ORGANIC RECYCLING CHALLENGES	6
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	7

Kern County Organics Diversion Strategy

Background

It has been over 25 years since the passage of Assembly Bill 939 enacted the Integrated Waste Management Act of 1989. The most widely known provision of AB 939 was the requirement for each jurisdiction to divert 25 percent of its waste stream from disposal by January 1, 1995, and to divert 50 percent of its waste stream by January 1, 2000. To inform the Board of Supervisors of the challenge ahead and to lay out a strategy to accomplish this feat, the newly formed Kern County Waste Management Department (Department) developed and brought to the Board the *Waste Diversion Plan, Implementing a County-Wide Strategy* on December 15, 1992. The *Waste Diversion Plan* contained a clearly articulated set of diversion goals necessary to guide County waste diversion planning efforts. These goals are:

1. Implement those programs first that make the most economic and public service sense.
2. Implement only those programs that would allow the County to comply with the law in a prudent, phased, and cost-effective manner.
3. Maximize the cost-effective life of our existing facilities.
4. Implement all programs in a manner that maximizes customer satisfaction.

Over the years, adherence to these goals lead to the implementation of successful, cost-effective, yet practical recycling programs. Practical recycling programs which targeted diversion of construction and demolition debris and green waste. Most jurisdictions outside Kern County initially implemented curbside recycling which required separate collection and significant investment in blue carts and Material Recovery Facilities, targeting only 7 percent of the waste stream at a cost of over \$100 per diverted ton. The Kern County approach targeted 50 percent of the waste stream at a cost of \$14 to \$29 per diverted ton. These program decisions were reflective of the unique characteristics of the local waste stream, but were made possible due to the level of service and stability of the franchise hauling system, the strength and structure of the Solid Waste Enterprise Fund, a foundation of established solid waste infrastructure, and collaboration with our City partners. The original *Waste Diversion Plan* has been repeatedly updated with status reports in 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2004, and 2006, informing the Board of legislative, regulatory and operational changes. Implementation of the *Waste Diversion Plan* has resulted in achieving 63 percent waste diversion countywide in 2013.

Regulation and Legislation

While the original impetus for waste diversion mandates was the specter of dwindling landfill capacity, climate change and the reduction of greenhouse gases is now the primary focus. The passage of Assembly Bill 32 (AB 32), the California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006, required the California Air Resources Board (ARB) to develop a Scoping Plan that describes the approach California will take to achieve a sharp reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions to achieve the goal of reducing emissions to 1990 levels by 2020.

Section II.C.15 of the AB 32 Scoping Plan specifically recommends the following measures:

(Emphasis added)

Reduce methane emissions at landfills. Increase waste diversion, composting and other beneficial uses of organic materials, and mandate commercial recycling.

Additionally, Section II.C.15 indicates that *“CIWMB will explore the use of incentives for all Recycling and Waste Management measures, including for commercial recycling and for local*

jurisdictions to encourage the collection of residentially and commercially-generated food scraps for composting and in-vessel anaerobic digestion.”

AB 341, Mandatory Commercial Recycling was passed and implemented in 2012. AB 341 targeted businesses that generate 4 cy/week of cumulative solid waste including recyclables and compostable organics, multi-family residential properties with 5 units or more, and established a new state strategic goal where, by the year 2020, 75 percent of solid waste generated in the state would be managed solely by source reduction, recycling and composting.

In August 2013, the Department informed the Board of Supervisors that according to Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery (CalRecycle) Organic Roadmap IV (2011), food waste is the largest fraction of compostable material disposed of statewide, comprising five million tons annually. Also, according to CalRecycle, diverting this amount of food waste to technologies such as anaerobic digestion and composting, statewide diversion could reach 75 percent when coupled with Mandatory Commercial Recycling.

Subsequently, on September 28, 2014, AB 1826, Mandatory Commercial Organic Recycling and AB 1594, Green Waste Alternate Daily Cover (ADC) were passed. AB 1826, Mandatory Commercial Organic Recycling requires businesses to recycle/compost organic waste. The legislation employs staged implementation beginning April 1, 2016 and culminating January 1, 2019. AB 1826 initially targets businesses that generate 8 cy/week of compostable organic waste and expands to include businesses that generate 4 cy/week of cumulative solid waste.

AB 1594 defines that green waste used as alternate daily cover (ADC) at landfills does not constitute diversion through recycling and would be considered disposal as of January 1, 2020. While AB 1594 will not significantly impact Kern County, it will significantly impact landfills in southern California, where the practice is fairly common.

The CalRecycle Organic Roadmap II (2008) projected that approximately 100 new and/or expanded composting facilities, a 50 percent increase, will be needed to reduce the amount of organics in the waste stream by 2020. Most of these facilities are expected to be sited in the Central Valley near agricultural markets. The State acknowledged that siting organic management facilities of any type would be very difficult given the proposed Air District and Water Board regulations.

The cumulative impact of AB 1826 and AB 1594, together with the increased Air District and Water Board regulations will significantly increase competition for existing private composting capacity, will increase operational costs and flood existing markets.

Existing Infrastructure and Programs

As noted above, in the early 1990's Kern County and the City of Bakersfield targeted green waste and wood waste diversion as a primary and necessary component to cost effectively meet the original AB 939 diversion mandates. The following factors informed this decision:

- A long growing season and large residential parcels resulted in green waste and landscape material comprising over 30 percent of the waste stream countywide.
- The standard frequency of residential trash service was twice per week due to relatively high seasonal temperatures.
- Distinctive to Kern County, garden/landscape services typically include the removal and delivery of landscape trimmings to a solid waste/composting facility.
- The Kern County agricultural industry affords local markets for compost.

The City of Bakersfield took the lead to develop the Mt. Vernon Green Waste Facility. In 1992, the County and City entered into a joint agreement to fund the composting facility. The Mt. Vernon Green Waste Facility was instrumental in creating an economic incentive for "clean green" waste by rejecting any contaminated yard waste. Gardeners/landscapers were responsible to keep the yard trimmings clean, free of litter and trash, or their loads would be rejected. Rejected green waste would necessitate a longer haul distance to the landfill. As a result, organic recycling of green waste and wood waste in the Metro area has been occurring successfully for over 20 years. In 2000, the County, the City and the franchise haulers implemented automated residential refuse collection and curbside collection of green waste. To accomplish this the frequency of service was modified from twice per week refuse collection to once per week refuse and once per week green waste collection for minimal additional cost.

Wood waste diversion was implemented at most County landfills and transfer stations in 1996. Wood waste consists of lumber and tree branches. The material is separated, stockpiled and ground. The ground wood waste is typically sold for biomass fuel to facilities such as Delano Energy, or used on-site for erosion control. Building on the success of the Metro green waste program and the County wood waste program, the County expanded green waste diversion at the Shafter-Wasco Recycling and Sanitary Landfill (RSLF) in 2003 and the Bena Sanitary Landfill (SLF) in 2004. A list of County facilities that process and divert green waste and wood waste is attached as Appendix A.

The San Joaquin Valley portion of Kern County has the following permitted private composting facilities:

- Community Recycling and Resource Recovery (CRRR) near Arvin,
- Synagro South Kern Compost Facility near Mettler, and
- Liberty Composting near Lost Hills.

CRRR accepts produce waste from large commercial grocers throughout the state as well as curbside green waste from the southern California. Synagro and Liberty, both biosolids composting facilities, primarily accept green waste from southern California. Both facilities have a Conditional Use Permit requirement to retain 10 percent of their permitted capacity to accept green waste or wood waste from Kern County jurisdictions.

Green waste from the Shafter-Wasco RSLF was initially transferred to Liberty Composting at a charge. The Department currently utilizes the Synagro Facility at no charge. Recently, the Department has implemented green waste screening and processing at the Shafter-Wasco RSLF to meet the more stringent acceptance criteria of the Synagro Compost Facility. It should be noted that typically, the private facilities do not accept self-haul organic waste nor do they accept non-screened or processed green waste collected straight from the curb.

A map of the network of public and private green waste processing/composting facilities is attached in Appendix B.

Funding and Program Considerations

In the state of California, the responsibility for providing adequate solid waste disposal capacity and services is assigned by the State to the County, while the responsibility for implementing recycling programs and achieving diversion mandates is assigned to individual jurisdictions. In most jurisdictions, public and private solid waste facilities charge a gate fee to cover the cost of facility operations for landfills, transfer stations, composting facilities, and recycling facilities. Residential and commercial customers pay the gate fee either through their collection/hauling services or directly at the gate of the facility. In the early 1990s, concerns over the increased cost of recycling and waste management services and the potential unintended consequence of

illegal dumping, prompted the Board of Supervisors to adopt a system by which residential parcels pay a Land Use Fee (LUF) collected on the tax roll, and commercial customers pay a Gate Fee (GF). The system incentivized businesses to recycle and discouraged illegal dumping by residents. The LUF/GF system was implemented countywide and taken together creates the Solid Waste Enterprise Fund. For the last 25 years, the Solid Waste Enterprise Fund has provided stable funding for the construction, operation and eventual closure of the landfills, transfer stations, and special waste facilities countywide, as well as the remediation and maintenance of the legacy burn dumps.

As diversion programs were initially developed, the County developed and operated diversion programs at landfills and transfer stations that were available to all residents and businesses, and cities developed and funded their individual programs. Therefore, when that City of Bakersfield developed the Mt. Vernon Green Waste Facility, the City and County entered into a long-standing agreement in which the City operated the facility and paid for city customers and the County contributed the pro-rated cost share for County customers. While this arrangement has worked to date because of the economies of scale created by the partnership of the County and the City in the Metro Bakersfield area, it has created certain inequities. Eventually, several of the outlying cities asked to utilize the Shafter-Wasco RSLF green waste diversion program for their curbside green waste programs. In an attempt to be consistent with the City of Bakersfield agreement, the Department requested the cities pay their pro-rated portion of the program cost. The cities initially declined this request which has stymied the development of organic diversion programs in the outlying areas. With pressure mounting from CalRecycle for certain cities to seriously tackle curbside residential green waste or face compliance orders, the cities need access to centrally located, cost-effective programs. Similarly, with the passage of AB 1826, both city haulers and franchise haulers will eventually need to develop commercial organic collection routes and will need access to organic facilities.

In August 2013, the Board of Supervisors adopted the 2013 Kern County Solid Waste Infrastructure Plan which identified and designated the necessary facilities to provide the organic diversion programs. As indicated in the Infrastructure Plan, the Mt. Vernon Green Waste Facility is currently providing excellent service to Metro Bakersfield. The Shafter-Wasco RSLF and Bena SLF have the ability to expand organic processing and service the valley communities, and the Mojave-Rosamond RSLF is ideally suited to provide similar services to the desert region.

Therefore, the Department believes it is in the best interest of the public to develop centrally located organic programs with a critical mass of green waste and wood waste to achieve cost effective organic processing and diversion for both residential and commercial customers. The Department can best achieve this by working together with the cities and the franchise haulers to handle as much of the organic waste stream within the County solid waste system and fee structure as possible. To accomplish this and resolve the inequities created by the existing policy of having each jurisdiction pay their pro rata share of curbside green waste processing while at the same time paying the Land Use Fee, the Department recommends that curbside green waste be accepted at the Mt. Vernon Green Waste Facility and at designated Kern County facilities at no charge and that the cost of processing and diversion be paid for by the Solid Waste Enterprise Fund. This will increase the County's pro rata share for the Mt. Vernon Green Waste Facility. But more importantly, this policy change is consistent with the transition from an emphasis on solid waste disposal to a confirmation of integrated waste management.

In the future, if the existing and proposed programs do not adequately divert sufficient volumes of organic waste from disposal, the County may need to consider implementing an economic incentive for residents and businesses, by charging for green waste at disposal sites.

“Chargeable” green waste could mean charging gardeners/landscaper for green waste disposal whether the green waste was generated from residential or commercial parcels. The Department realizes that a “chargeable” green waste policy may have unintended consequences that are not currently recognized, such as increased illegal dumping, increased contamination, and the need to develop separate commercial green waste collection. A “chargeable” green waste policy is also currently contrary to procedures at the Mt. Vernon Green Waste Facility. However, if the State implements an outright ban on the disposal of organic waste, as previously threatened, a “chargeable” green waste policy for disposal may be an appropriate tool to effect the needed change. The Department intends to keep this option open, but recognizes that a shift to “chargeable” green waste would be a significant change and needs further evaluation.

Development and Expansion of Green Waste Processing and Composting

Countywide, 72 percent of households currently have access to curbside green waste collection. Additionally, new curbside green waste collection programs are planned for certain Universal Collection Areas. Cities are expected to implement curbside green waste programs provided they have convenient access to organics processing at no additional charge.

In the case of green waste, the Department proposes to enhance the capability and capacity to handle all residential green waste, including curbside collection programs, through existing facilities. The City of Bakersfield Green Waste Facility at Mt. Vernon is currently capable of processing and composting all residential curbside green waste collected in the Metro Bakersfield area as well as all residential and commercial green waste self-hauled to the facility.

The Department proposes to expand green waste processing and screening at the Shafter-Wasco, Bena and Mojave-Rosamond Landfills. Screened and consolidated green waste will then be transferred to the nearest composting facilities, as long as composting capacity is available through other facilities. It is projected that composting capacity will become increasingly scarce as AB 1826 and AB 1594 are phased-in statewide; therefore, the Department recommends developing full composting capability in the short term at the Shafter-Wasco RSLF. Eventually, composting capability may be warranted at the Mojave-Rosamond RSLF. This would likely be dependent on developing cost effective regional partnerships.

Green Waste Expansion Program Services

	FY 15/16	FY 16/17	FY 17/18	FY 18/19
Shafter-Wasco	Processing and Transfer	Processing and Transfer	Composting	Composting
Bena	Processing and Transfer	Processing and Transfer	Processing and Transfer	Processing and Transfer
Mojave-Rosamond			Processing and Transfer	Processing and Transfer

The Department has developed cost projections to implement the proposed organic waste program expansion as well as the increase in expenditures for the Mt. Vernon Green Waste Facility. The costs and expenditures have been factored into the Solid Waste Enterprise Fund 15-year financial forecast. The following table presents the short-term implementation costs by general category and fiscal year.

Green Waste Expansion Program Costs

	FY 15/16	FY 16/17	FY 17/18	FY 18/19	Total
Capital	\$1,600,000	\$6,760,000	\$1,050,000	\$0	\$9,410,000
Labor	\$0	\$451,120	\$631,720	\$631,720	Annual/Ongoing
Maintenance	15,000	\$90,000	\$120,000	\$120,000	Annual/Ongoing
Transport		\$50,000	\$150,000	\$150,000	Annual/Ongoing
Mt. Vernon	\$1,000,000	\$1,100,000	\$1,200,000	\$1,200,000	Annual/Ongoing
Revenue		\$250,000	\$250,000	\$250,000	Annual/Ongoing
Total	\$1,615,000	\$8,360,870	\$3,151,470	\$1,851,720	

Incorporating the existing residential curbside green waste programs into the Solid Waste Enterprise Fund is estimated to cover the cost of 109,000 tons per year of existing diversion. Implementing the expanded green waste diversion program is estimated to incorporate an additional 65,500 tons per year of green waste diversion at a total aggregate unit cost of \$29/ton. Cost estimates are conservatively high. The Solid Waste Enterprise Fund 15-year financial forecast projects that long-term implementation of the Green Waste Expansion Program will necessitate requesting the Board to approve cost of living adjustments estimated at 3 percent for four consecutive years in FY 23/24 through FY 26/27 to maintain an available fund balance of \$10 million in any one fiscal year. No other rate adjustments are projected prior to FY 23/24 for the Solid Waste Enterprise System. However, it should be noted that there are other legislative and industry dynamics that could additionally impact the Integrated Waste Management System. The Department will continue to be watchful and recommend adjustments as necessary.

Organic Recycling Challenges

With the existing hauling, processing and biomass infrastructure in Kern County, the County is well positioned to address the demands of Mandatory Commercial Organic Recycling for wood waste, and there is no need for expansion plans. However, there are indications that current wood waste markets may decline as the power purchase agreements of biomass facilities, such as Delano Energy, near expiration, and they have to compete with wind and solar projects under the Renewable Portfolio Standard. A decline in the biomass market will shift the diversion of urban and agricultural wood waste from biomass, a revenue generator, to composting at increased cost.

Additionally, food waste processing presents new challenges and opportunities. Food waste has a high intrinsic energy value for conversion to biogas coupled with significant odor challenges. While vegetative food waste can be traditionally composted along with green waste and wood waste, protein based food waste such as meat, fish, chicken and eggs can create odor issues when composted if not carefully managed.

To accommodate food waste, the City of Bakersfield has been conducting pilot/ demonstration composting projects over the last three years to modify the configuration of traditional windrows to Aerated Static Piles. Transitioning windrows to Aerated Static Piles shows great potential to conserve operational space, conserve water use, and also appears to allow existing composting facilities to meet the Air District and Water Board standards while accommodating more food waste. It is currently uncertain whether new/expanding facilities will be able take advantage of the Aerated Static Pile system, or whether new/expanding facilities will be held to a more

stringent standard, such as an in-vessel composting system. For the purposes of projecting the costs to expand the green waste program, the Department used the more conservative estimates of an in-vessel composting system at the Shafter-Wasco Integrated Waste Management Facility.

It is fairly certain that given the aim of AB 1826, to define compostable organics as food waste, green waste, landscape and pruning waste, wood waste and food-soiled paper waste that is mixed in with food waste, there will be pressure in the future to utilize existing curbside green waste collection to incorporate some food waste and food-soiled paper. The City of Arvin implemented this change in 2003 in an effort to meet the original AB 939 mandates. The Arvin curbside organic waste was initially composted at the Community Recycling and Resource Recovery Facility near Arvin, but is currently being composted at the Mt. Vernon Green Waste Facility.

While the existing private facilities of Synagro, Liberty and Community Recycling and Resource Recovery Facility are not currently permitted to accept the full range of food waste, it is expected that most private facilities are investigating ways to accommodate food waste and will pursue permit amendments to handle food waste in the near future. However, given the increasing demand and competition for composting capacity, the County cannot assume and depend on private facilities providing cost-effective composting capacity for the entire compostable organic waste stream in the County. Fortunately, existing County solid waste infrastructure is suited to meet this demand as needed. The Department proposes to work with our partners and continue to research and analyze options to best meet the food waste diversion challenge.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The Waste Management Department is committed to constantly improving the way in which we manage the County's waste stream and recognizes that organic waste management is the next big challenge. Over the last 25 years, the recycling, composting and disposal infrastructure have become truly integrated, and are poised to expand and evolve to meet the legislative mandates of AB 1826 and AB 1594. The Department believes it is in the best interests of the public to develop centrally located organic programs with a critical mass of green waste and wood waste to achieve cost effective organic processing and diversion for both residential and commercial customers. The Department has developed this plan to address the organic processing challenge.

To accomplish this and resolve inequities created by existing policy, the Department recommends that curbside green waste be accepted at the Mt. Vernon Green Waste Facility and at designated Kern County facilities at no charge and that the cost of processing and diversion be paid for by the Solid Waste Enterprise Fund. This policy will strengthen the Solid Waste Enterprise Fund, promote organic recycling, and is consistent with the transition from an emphasis on solid waste disposal to a confirmation of integrated waste management.

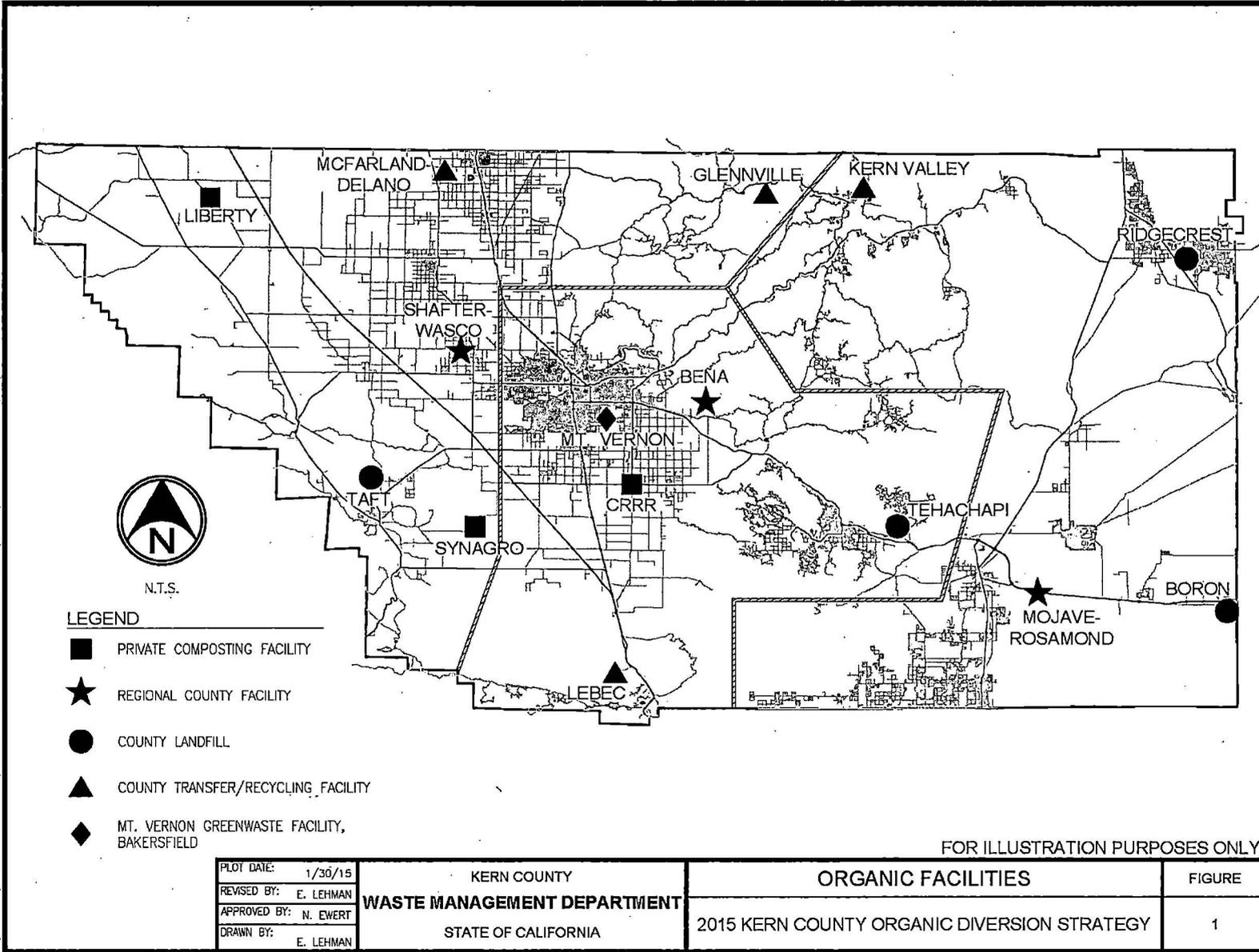
APPENDIX A

Kern County Solid Waste Facilities Existing Green Waste and Wood Waste Programs

	Green Waste	Wood Waste
Bena Landfill	X	X
Boron Landfill		
Kern Valley TS		X
Lebec TS	X	X
McFarland/Delano TS	X	X
Mojave-Rosamond		X
Ridgecrest Landfill		X
Shafter-Wasco Landfill	X	X
Taft Landfill	X	X
Tehachapi Landfill		X

APPENDIX B

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FOR ILLUSTRATION PURPOSES ONLY

PLOT DATE: 1/30/15 REVISED BY: E. LEHMAN APPROVED BY: N. EWERT DRAWN BY: E. LEHMAN	KERN COUNTY WASTE MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT STATE OF CALIFORNIA	ORGANIC FACILITIES 2015 KERN COUNTY ORGANIC DIVERSION STRATEGY	FIGURE 1
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