Association of Compost Producers

People, Food & Land Foundation
Nourishing Land, Empowering Communities

Compost Caravan 2026 Events Report

May 6th - Fowler, Fresno County
May 8th - Fresno, Frenso County
June 4th - Irvine, Orange County
October 22nd - Bonita, San Diego County



Programmatic Overview

The Compost Caravan launched in 2026 through a partnership between the **People, Food and Land Foundation** and the **Association of Compost Producers** and aims to activate diverse stakeholders to explore how compost can solve local issues, contribute to their community's abundance, and connect to statewide goals and funding opportunities.

In our inaugural year, we ran four events across three counties that collectively brought together over 200 attendees across 84 organizations. Across the events we engaged with the offices of 7 city, county, state, and federal elected officials and had 4 elected officials publically speak at the events. Sponsorships from 6 partner organizations helped support these events, as well as the collective support of dozens of organizing partners.

It takes a village to put on these events, and we are so thankful for the many people who supported our vision!

Association of Compost Producers

People, Food & Land Foundation
Nourishing Land, Empowering Communities

Compost Caravan Fowler Event Report

May 6th, 2026 - Fowler, California



Executive Summary

Presented by People, Food and Land Foundation (PFL) and the Association of Compost Producers (ACP), Compost Caravan for Farmers promoted compost use in agriculture within the Central Valley. We partnered with the Sierra Resource Conservation District (Sierra RCD), Farms, Food, Future Local (F3 Local), the Farmer Ag Network, and the Central Valley Community Fund. F3 Local conducted a compost spreading demonstration to promote their new Equipment Lending Library program. Sierra RCD provided information regarding the Healthy Soils Block Grant and facilitated a conversation between farmers and other attendees. Compost samples from Mid Valley Recycling, Kochergen Farms Compost, and Biofiltro were available for participants to interact with. John Heywood from PFL and Dr. Rebecca Ryals from UC Merced facilitated a joint discussion regarding the benefits and opportunity for compost use in California agriculture.

Fowler Event: Compost Caravan for Farmers

Event Structure

Location: Fowler Family Farm, 7589 De Wolf Avenue, Fowler, CA 93625

Date: Wednesday May 6th, 10AM-4PM

Cost: Free of charge

Compost Spreading Equipment Demonstration & Training: F3 Local hosted a compost spreader training session. Eligible small-scale farmers that participated will be registered as able to borrow the compost spreaders from the Equipment Lending Library program.

Guided Discussion with Sierra RCD & Compost Samples: Sierra RCD shared information on composting as a CDFA approved healthy soil practice, the role of compost in our soils, benefits of using compost, and funding opportunities for accessing compost + other soil health practices. Compost samples from Kochergen Farms Compost, Mid Valley Disposal, and Biofiltro were available for farmers to interact with and take home samples.

Lunch Break: A traditional tamale lunch with beans, greens, and aqua fresca was provided by a local family. Event participants were able to enjoy the shade of the regenerative orchard while furthering their connections through good food and good conversations.

Donald Thomas' Demonstration: A local regenerative farm shared ideas on how to manage on-farm organic materials, including a discussion around his personal on-farm composting operation, successes, and lessons learned in the process.

Guided Discussion with UC Merced & People, Food and Land Foundation: Rebecca Ryals from UC Merced and John Heywood from PFL led conversations surrounding composting opportunities in the Central Valley, the value of compost in soils, and its importance to local agricultural, economic, and land health.



Thank You Sponsor!

F3 FARMS FOOD FUTURE LOCAL Farms & Food Innovation

Thank You Partners!

FARMER AG NETWORK

SIERRA RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT

CELEBRATING 60 YEARS | CENTRAL VALLEY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Fowler Event: Compost Caravan for Farmers

Attendence Overview





- 56 registered online (roughly 40% registration attendance rate)
- 46 total attendees (multiple categories may be chosen for each attendee)
  - 16 organizing partners (35%)
    - People, Food and Land Foundation
    - Association of Compost Producers
    - Sierra Resource Conservation District
    - F3 Local & F3 Innovate
    - Biofiltro
    - Kochergen Farms Compost
    - UC Merced
  - 12 farmers (26%)
  - 18 municipal, state, research, farmer organization, industry attendees (39%)
    - Senator Adam Schiff's Office
    - Offer Kindness (gleaning organization)
    - City of Clovis
    - Viably
    - Waste Management
    - UCANR
    - City of Firebaugh Council Member
    - CalCAN
    - F3 Local
    - California Alliance for Family Farmers
- Cities represented in attendance
  - San Jose (5)
  - Fresno (2)
  - Merced, Modesto, Clovis, Redding, Los Angeles, Parlier, Albany, Roseville, Charlestown, Sacramento

Fowler Event: Compost Caravan for Farmers

Farmer Participant Insights

Why Use Compost

- Improves water retention and infiltration (especially useful for flood irrigation)
- Increases soil bioactivity and loosens soil structure
- Better root intake
- Higher micronutrient content in crops (noted as only achievable through compost)
- One other farmer has used compost exclusively for 37 years with no nitrogen deficiencies on his raisin, grape, and stonefruit operation



How Long It Takes to See Results/ Maintenance

- Benefits require continued application. The almond grower saw yields decline after about 3 years without reapplication
- The almond grower in his 3rd year using compost and has eliminated all inorganic fertilizers (CAN 17, UAN 32), with leaf samples consistently showing nitrogen within range

Fowler Event: Compost Caravan for Farmers

Farmer Participant Insights (cont.)

What to Look for When Buying Compost

- Affordability is a priority
- Bioactivity matters more than C:N ratio for purchasing decisions
- Most farmers rely on PCAs (Pest Control Advisors) to evaluate compost quality rather than reading reports themselves
- Experimentation with Alternative Amendments
- The almond grower is trialing digestate ($10/lb) from a local Anaerobic Digester.
- The almond grower is also trialing a cheese factory biofertilizer byproduct that he notes is biologically active

Equipment & Access Needs

- Farmers raised the question of how to manage materials without equipment access
- Interest in free or subsidized spreading services
- Noted that farmers are a tough demographic to get to show up at events, recommended that these types of events be mandatory
- One other farmer noted that these types of events are critical and was interested in hosting something similar within his community

Results from Survey (17 respondents, mostly farmers. Not every respondent answered every question.)

- 11/16 (69%) respondents noted an increase in confidence in applying compost to their lands after the event
- When asked to choose their biggest reasons for using compost on farms, crop nutrient availability and irrigation/water savings were the most chosen response, followed closely by less reliance on fertilizers and extreme weather resilience.
- 5/15 (33%) of respondents said they were very likely to use F3 Local's equipment lending library, 3/15 chose somewhat likely, 5/15 chose neutral, and 2/15 chose not likely.
- 7/16 (44%) of respondents noted they were very likely to start on-farm composting, 3/16 chose somewhat unlikely, 3/16 chose neutral, and 3/16 chose somewhat likely.



Fowler Event: Compost Caravan for Farmers

Logistical Reflections & Improvements

What Went Well

- We had the event well documented thanks to our media hire, and now have video clips that we can share to continue to promote future Compost Caravan events
- Our non-profit partners supported the event with communications and sending representatives to the event.
- The spreading demonstration was well received and the portion of the event the farmers were most excited for.
- Compost samples engaged participants to touch, smell, and ask questions about specific compost materials.
- People most enjoyed lunch and the refreshments.



What Could Be Improved

- Farmers could have had more opportunities to share stories and challenges, rather than listening to questions from our non-profit partners.
- Follow up communications to include resources from our supporting partners (i.e. ACP's website, the link to F3 Local's Equipment Library, and the Healthy Soil Block Grant application). Communications could have also included the registrants who did not show up.
- Timing of event and heat considerations

Recommendations for Future Events

- Prioritize farmer voices
- One large, rotation group rather than break out groups if we have less than 30 participants.
- Less programming, more demonstrations and hands-on activities
- Start the event earlier in the morning and end the event after lunch
- Surveys and materials to be handed out during lunch



Association of Compost Producers

People, Food & Land Foundation
Nourishing Land, Empowering Communities

Compost Caravan Fresno Event Report

May 8th, 2026 - Fresno, California



Executive Summary

This event supported the regional compost markets in the Fresno region, with an emphasis on compost use on urban lands. PFL and ACP partnered with Fresno Metro Ministry, Cypress Compost Co., Mid Valley Recycling, the City of Clovis, and the County of Fresno. The event toured a local community garden, urban farms, and small-scale compost operation at Yo'Ville Community Gardens. Next, the group toured the large commercial scale compost facility of Mid Valley, which operates using Aerated Static Piles (ASP). The event ended at Kearney Park, with demonstrations of compost spreading on turf grass, compost sock blowing, and a tree compost blanket blowing.

Fresno Event: Compost Caravan for Communities

Event Structure

Date: Friday May 8th, 9AM-6PM

Tickets: Free of charge

Tour of Yo'Ville Community Gardens & Cypress Compost Co.: At the community space run by Fresno Metro Ministry, participants witnessed the effect access to land stewardship can have on the local community and ecosystem. What once was an abandoned lot is now a thriving food hub and forest where over 100 families have access to fresh, local produce and farming opportunities. The site hosts various Climate Corp Fellows and their cultural projects, including native plant restoration. The site is home to a small composting business, run by veteran Roe Williams, making the entire garden run as a closed-loop system.

Lunch: Provided participants a chance to connect while enjoying the shade in the garden, fresh food provided by a local family, further exploration and conversations about the importance and opportunities of compost.

Tour of Mid Valley Disposal Composting Facility: Mid Valley showed what composting looks like at scale, with the site accepting around 300 tons of municipal organics every day from the surrounding cities. Attendees saw the land that recently had 60,000 tons of finished compost before it was sold to the agricultural sector, and got to stand next to the 15-foot tall piles. They also saw the unique challenges of operating at that scale, namely the film plastic contamination that continues to plague the industry due to residential contamination.

Compost Spreading & Blowing Demonstration at Kearney Park: Earth & Turf showcased their equipment in a turf-grass compost application demo using compost from Mid Valley. The thin layer of compost will eventually feed the soil in Kearney Park, leading to improved water holding capacity and healthier grass. Clairemont Equipment set up a compost sock meant to filter contaminants such as diesel fuel and metals that runoff from our roads, protecting our natural lands, and a compost blanket blowing to support tree health.

Partner Tabling Opportunity: Partners and organizers were invited to set up tables to represent their organizations and provide resources to learn from each other and discuss the different players supporting a regional compost economy.

Thank You Partners!

F3 FARMS FOOD FUTURE LOCAL Farms & Food Innovation

FRESNO METRO MINISTRY

MID VALLEY DISPOSAL™

CITY of CLOVIS

Earth&Turf
Another's Compost Upstream Company

FINN®

Fresno Event: Compost Caravan for Communities

Attendence Overview







38 registered online (48% registration attendance rate)

36 attendees throughout the event

- 19 organizing partners (52%)
  - Fresno Metro Ministry
  - Cypress Compost Co.
  - Mid Valley Recycling
  - City of Clovis
  - County of Fresno
  - Finn Corp
  - Earth & Turf Spreading
- 12 farmers (26%)
- 8 municipal staff (22%)
  - City of Clovis
  - City of Fresno
  - City of Kerman
  - County of Fresno
  - City of Mendota
- 25 other Attendees
  - Sierra RCD
  - BEAM Circular
  - UC Master Gardeners
  - California Alliance for Family Farmers
  - Office of Senator Adam Schiff
  - F3 Innovate
  - Central Valley Community Fund
  - Waste Management

Fresno Event: Compost Caravan for Communities

Insights from Attendees

City of Clovis Solid Waste

- Their attendance will make it easier for other departments to gain trust in the program
- Economic development lens is crucial
- Inter-departmental collaboration is hard and typically reserved for housing and development projects
- Solid waste departments are typically understaffed and over-burdened, it's hard to consider anything outside of diversion and public education
- There's no existing structure within government to support these types of urban farming initiatives, asking staff to create something new feels like a huge lift



City of Fresno Solid Waste

- Before the event was not interested in talking about procurement because they already had a contract with a procurement provider
- Mentioned that applying compost to parks wasn't a procurement or equipment issue, but a park staffing issue
- Attempted to get Water Conservation department out to the event, but was unsuccessful
- Seemed receptive to aligning solid waste initiatives with other planning initiatives, such as rewilding and park access

Fresno Event: Compost Caravan for Communities

Insights from Attendees (cont.)

County of Fresno Public Works

- Parks department interested in learning about the different types of spreading and blowing equipment, particularly the size of equipment
- FEMA grants have been increasingly challenging to compete for due to understaffing and increased metrics required during the application project
    - Mentioned that there are still roads impacted from 2023 storms that need attention, but there is no funding
    - Compost socks and erosion control was particularly interesting to them in regards to post-storm road management, but limited by funds and staffing to apply for grants

Results from Survey (4 City of Clovis, 1 County of Fresno, and Roe)

- No respondents knew sites could go up to 500 cubic yards without permits if partnered with government agency
- Irrigation / water savings most noted reason for compost application
- Neutral or slight interest about DSP agreements with small scale composters
- Funding for staff or staff availability most noted challenge for compost programs



Fresno Event: Compost Caravan for Communities

Logistical Reflections & Improvements

What Went Well

- Most Impactful/ Well Received Narratives:
  - Using procurement requirements and AB 2346 opportunities to gain access to land leads to so much more than composting
  - Incubator for small businesses to make value added products- economic development
  - Sharing farming/ composting expertise in communal spaces - workforce development
  - AB 1889 rewilding mention around native planting work driven by Climate Corp Fellow well received
  - Brownfield remediation potential
- Touring a site like Yo'Ville with multiple benefits drove a strong case for access to public lands: local food production, food access, increased biodiversity, brownfield restoration, and small business incubation. Made it very easy to highlight PFL's planning work.
- The application demonstrations contextualized procurement targets for attendees
  - A 7 cubic yard demonstration vs procurement targets for City of Clovis (14,000 cubic yards) and City of Fresno (60,000 cubic yards) - scale of opportunity seemed to click
- Community composters visiting the commercial facility sparked appreciation for the challenges seen at the larger sites, and invited ideas of collaboration.
  - Roe mentioned he may be interested in inoculating Mid Valley's compost to improve its bioactivity
  - There was interest in taking more community composters on commercial facility tours
- We had the event well documented thanks to our media hire, and now have video clips that we can share to continue to promote future Compost Caravan events

What Went Well

- **Transportation:**
  - People showed up to and left the event at every stop due to lack of transportation.
  - The largest group joined us at the start of the day for the Yo'Ville Gardens tour.
  - All the city staff members left during the Mid Valley Recycling tour. Most of the staff were from Solid Waste departments, and they mentioned that touring the facility was already part of their onboarding.
  - The smallest group joined us for the end of the day with the compost application demonstrations.



- **Communication Between Organizers:**
  - Mid Valley Recycling noted that our group was 30 minutes late and the group was much smaller than originally communicated. This led to overstaffing on their end.
  - The tabling opportunities during the compost application demonstration was intended to be public facing, but there were not very many people at the park outside of our group. This did not meet some of our partner's expectations. It did get all partners to show up, though.

Fresno Event: Compost Caravan for Communities

Logistical Reflections & Improvements (cont.)

- **Post Event Communications:**
  - Could have shared more resources from our partners, such as the Brownfield event hosted by Fresno Metro Ministry and the regional Compost Rebate program
  - Engaged with all registrants in follow up emails, regardless of whether or not they attended the event



Recommendations for Future Events

- Prioritize transportation in budget for events with multiple stops to help with participant retention
- Heat/shade/water considerations during the community garden tour, with breaks for refreshments and shade if the tour is to go on for more than 1 hour
  - Communicate time expectations with tour guides to keep us on schedule for the following stops
- Earlier engagement with key organizational groups in the region
  - Would have known that there were a lot of other events happening that week
  - Could have engaged better with trusted local organizations that have open communications with city staff (UC Master Gardeners)
  - Understand limitations in communications with cities and counties. Seems to be a process we're missing
- Collect phone number for all organizing partners for improved communication during the event



Association of Compost Producers

People, Food & Land Foundation
Nourishing Land, Empowering Communities

Compost Caravan Irvine Event Report

June 4th, 2026 - Irvine, California



Executive Summary

Compost Caravan Irvine highlighted the urban uses of compost and strengthened the connection between the green bin and our soils. The event was supported by organizing partners at Orange County Waste and Recycling (OCWR), University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources (UCANR), Orange County Sheriff Department, Cool OC, and Eco-Products. During the event, participants viewed a compost blowing demonstration at James A. Musick Facility, toured both the South Coast Research & Extension Center and Frank R. Bowerman Landfill & Greenery.

County of Orange OC Waste&Recycling
Our Community. Our Commitment.

UC Research & Extension Centers
University of California
Agriculture & Natural Resources

Irvine Event: Compost Caravan

Event Structure

Date: Thursday June 4th, 8:30AM-3:30PM

Compost Blowing Demonstration: Conducted by Finn Corp at the James A. Musick Facility. Demonstrated compost blankets and compost sock blowing for stormwater management and erosion control.

Guided Tour of South Coast Research & Extension Center: Toured the Master Composter's site, where organizers showcased their teaching garden and demonstration hot-compost piles. Participants joined the wagon tour, which drives around the center and showcases the irrigation trials that have been conducted on fruiting trees.

Zero Waste Lunch Break: Provided by a gut-health forward, local caterer followed by speeches from OCWR/Frank R. Bowerman, Councilwoman Melinda Liu, and Vice Mayor James Mai. Speakers named the importance of having government support when setting up composting programs.

Frank R. Bowerman Landfill & Greenery Tour: Driving tour of the windrow composting operation, compost application sites for odor reduction, and the landfilling operation. The composting operation was presented as a necessary strategy to increase the longevity of the landfill through diversion initiatives.

Ticket Sales: We provided four different pricing options for tickets: Free, $20 "Suggested Donation", $50 "Supporter", and $100 "Champion"



Thank You Sponsors!

TETRA TECH

SCS ENGINEERS
Environmental Consultants and Contractors

ECOVERSE

AGROMIN

Thank You Supporters!

FINN

ECO PRODUCTS

CoolOC

Irvine Event: Compost Caravan

Attendence Overview







54 registered online (90% registrant attendance rate)

60 total attendees

- 7 organizing partners (12%)
  - People, Food and Land Foundation
  - Association of Compost Producers
  - UCANR
  - OCWR
  - Eco-Products
  - Cool OC
- 16 Municipal Staff and Local Leaders (27%)
  - Vice Mayor of Irvine
  - Councilmember Melinda Liu
  - Councilmember Mike Carroll Office Members
  - City of Fountain Valley
  - OC Department of Education
  - City of San Diego
  - Riverside County
- 24 Composters/ Waste Management (40%)
  - OCWR
  - Republic Services
  - Waste Management
  - Miramar Greenery
  - LA Compost
  - Viably
  - Agromin
  - Serrano Creek Ranch
  - MidWay City Sanitary District
  - Kellogg Garden Product
  - Clairemont Equipment
- 13 nonprofits, residents, consultants, and state agencies (22%)
  - CAFF
  - Inside the Outdoors
  - Orange Sustainability Group
  - HF&H Consultants
  - CalRecycle

Irvine Event: Compost Caravan

Attendee Insights and Feedback

- Attendants noted that they enjoyed the compost blowing demonstration. Some attendants noted the large amount of plastic contamination in the mulch/compost we used at the James A. Musick Facility. Many asked for more context.
- Attendants seemed to enjoy interacting with compost during the Master Composter's demonstration.
- Residents and HOAs in the area are hesitant to start community composting sites because of rat pressure.
- Giving away free compost was noted to have affected other local composting businesses' ability to market their compost at higher prices.
- OCWR is always looking to expand their markets and find new uses for their compost, including how to use the compost on their landfill site for odor mitigation.
- The tour of Frank R. Bowerman Landfill had many attendees for the first time seeing a large compost and landfill operation. They noted it was very impactful and some mentioned an immediate consideration in engaging with composting programs.



Irvine Event: Compost Caravan

Logistical Reflections & Improvements

What Went Well

- **Transportation & Timing:** We prioritized funding a bus to transport all participants between each stop. This significantly improved retention of attendees and improved our timing between stops.
- **Communication Between Organizing Partners:** We improved our communication with partners regarding our arrival times and number of attendees between stops. All partners felt prepared for our attendees.
- **Registrant Attendance:** We had a 90% registrant attendance rate for this event. We mostly attribute this to our decision to charge for tickets.



What Could Be Improved

- **Guiding Narrative:** PFL and ACP could drive a stronger overall narrative to the events to provide a smoother transition between stops and contextualize compost more broadly across all stakeholders.
- **Smoother Check-in:** The check-in process could have been improved with slight organizational changes.
- **Smoother Transitions:** Transitions between stops could have used more buffer time.
- **Demographic & Feedback Data:** Collecting zip codes and organizational affiliation during registration did not begin until one week before the event. Follow-up surveys sent by email received very low engagement.

Recommendations for Future Events

- **Introduction & Transitions:** Katya and Stephanie to prepare a script for introducing the event and threading together each stop of the compost caravan. This will provide a guiding narrative throughout the event and contextualize compost in larger systems.
- **Check-in Improvements:** Include pre-printed name tags in the preparation; consider purchasing reusable or compostable tags. Alphabetized check in lists should be sent to all partners end-of-day prior to the event. Refreshments and sign in tables to be set up 30 minutes before check-in time.
- **Transportation Transition:** Plan for 10 minute buffer periods before and after each stop for passenger loading. Provide clear instructions as to the time and location of pick up.
- **Registration Data:** Require organizational affiliation and zip code before purchasing a ticket. Add optional feedback questions after ticket purchasing surrounding understanding and interactions with compost. This will provide baseline engagement data.
- **Material Handout:** Resources, hand outs, and printed surveys to be handed out during lunch hour or displayed right near lunch set up.



Association of Compost Producers

People, Food & Land Foundation
Nourishing Land, Empowering Communities

Compost Caravan San Diego Event Report

October 22nd, 2026 - Bonita, California



Executive Summary

The Compost Caravan San Diego celebration dinner honored great work happening in the San Diego region and highlighted key players that have pushed forward healthy soil work in the county. The event included an award ceremony where five individuals were named Compost Champions, followed by a Healthy Soil, Healthy Futures panel. Throughout the event, fifteen nominees were introduced with a short description, and experienced panelists shared their perspectives on where the compost movement has been and the opportunities they see coming. The event was catered by a local chef who worked hard to source ingredients from local farmers and food producers and local beverage companies provided us with a bar full of sustainably sourced options.

San Diego Event: Compost Caravan Celebration

Event Structure

Date: Wednesday, October 22nd 6:00-9:30PM

Location: Ranchito Milkyway
7275 San Miguel Road, Bonita, CA 91902

Cocktail Hour & Compost Samples: Thanks to our beverage sponsors **Boochcraft, Henwill Gin, and Tractor Beverage,** attendees enjoyed some drinks by the fire near the vegetable garden before the programming started. We also had piles of compost from five different local composters out on display, including **WM, Republic Services, City of San Diego Minamar Greenery, San Pasqual Valley Soils, and Kellogg Garden Products.**

Farm-to-Table Dinner: Chef Logan Mitchell from Cellar Door provided us with a delicious, locally sourced dinner of fish and veggie tacos, featuring food from **Tunaville, Somos Maiz, Masienda, Ranchito Milkyway, Avocado Bliss, JR Organics, and Sage Mountain**.

Compost Champion Awards: We honored fifteen of our local Compost Champions and distributed five awards: Compost Pioneer, Healthy Soil Hero, Mycelium Connector, Heavy Lifter, and Circular Systems Architect.

Healthy Soil, Healthy Future Panel: Four panelists each with a unique perspective discussed the past, present, and future of the compost movement and the roles we all play to push it forward.

Ticket Sales: We provided multiple pricing options and ample opportunities for free and discounted tickets. Standard tickets were $150 for “Compost Caravan Ticket”, $200 for “Compost Caravan Supporter”, $250 for “Compost Caravan Champion”, and $300 for “Compost Caravan Visionary”. We provided nominees and farmers who donated food with complimentary tickets and farmers and nominee plus ones with 50% off. Lastly, we had the option to buy a table for $3,000 which included 8 tickets and sponsorship promotions.

Thank You Supporters!

RANCHITO MILKYWAY

REPUBLIC SERVICES
Sustainability in Action

ECO PRODUCTS

The City of SAN DIEGO

grow with us
SAN PASQUAL VALLEY SOILS

100 GARDEN KELLOGG PRODUCTS 1925-2025

Thank You Sponsor!

WM®

San Diego Event: Compost Caravan Celebration

Attendence Overview

87 total attendees

- Community Based Organizations (10 attendees)
  - South Bay Sustainable Communities
  - Solana Center for Environmental Innovation
  - Foodshed Cooperative
  - Project New Village
  - Escondido AgX Regional Innovation Hub
  - San Diego Food System Alliance
  - Olivewood Gardens and Learning Center
  - the nexxus Bookshop + Café
  - Inika Small Earth Inc
- Compost, Compost Equipment, and Compostable Product Companies (32 attendees)
  - WM (headline sponsor)
  - Republic Services (table sponsor)
  - San Pasqual Valley Soils
  - Engel and Gray Inc
  - Eco-Products
  - CJ Biomaterials
  - Kellogg Garden Products
  - Viably
  - Greenrock / EDGE
  - Clean Composting Company
  - Consultants (6 attendees)
  - HDR Engineering Inc.
  - CCNG Developments
  - 211 San Diego
  - Liquid Symbol LLC
  - Richard Anthony Associates
- Elected Officials (5 attendees)
  - Office of California State Senate Catherine Blakespear
  - Office of San Diego County Board Chair Terra Lawson-Remer
- Farmers/Producers (9 attendees)
  - Ranchito Milkyway
  - Masienda
  - Avocado Bliss Retreat
  - SC Farming
  - Somos Maiz
  - Tunaville Market
- Municipal Staff (9 attendees)
  - County of San Diego
  - City of San Diego - Miramar Greenery
- Non-Profits (10 attendees)
  - Community Alliance with Family Farmers (CAFF)
  - Zero Foodprint
  - Sustainable Generation
  - Berry Good Food
  - Climate Action California
  - Farmhand Foundation
  - The 11th Hour Project
  - Community Alliance with Family Farmers
  - People, Food and Land Foundation
  - Association of Compost Producers
  - State Agency (3 attendees)
  - CalRecycle
  - UCANR



San Diego Event: Compost Caravan Celebration

Compost Champion Awards & Nominees

#1 Compost Pioneer: These nominees have dedicated a significant portion of their career to expanding compost creation and use.

- **AWARDEE Dr. Craig Kolodge, San Pasqual Valley Soil:** Dr. K has tirelessly shared his deep expertise with countless audiences, presenting to professional groups, community organizations, and national webinars with a generosity of spirit that has strengthened compost and mulch markets across the country. Through his work, San Pasqual Valley Soils models the circular organics economy in action through a partnership with the San Diego Zoo - they compost zoo manure and close the loop by using that compost to grow feed for zoo animals. His commitment to knowledge-sharing and market development has made him an indispensable leader in the compost community, respected as much for his technical mastery as for his willingness to mentor, encourage, and empower others.

- **Jessica Toth, Solana Center:** Jessica is a tireless advocate for community-centered action to promote healthy soil, waste reduction, and local collaboration. She has supported the establishment of multiple small and mid-scale composting systems across the county, and her leadership also directly encouraged an update to the SD County Organics Ordinance, which now supports more decentralized composting operations across the region. Her efforts garnered California's highest environmental honor in 2015 for Solana Center, with the Governor's Environmental & Economic Leadership Award – the first time the award recognized food waste as an environmental concern.

- **Rich Flammer, Hidden Resources:** Rich has more than 35 years of hands-on composting experience working extensively in California, ten other U.S. states, Mexico and the Caribbean. He has designed, managed, permitted, evaluated, and remediated more than 120 large-scale composting facilities for both private and public sector clients. He has also been involved in public policy formation, rulemaking development for state composting regulation, composting technology assessment and development, regional studies evaluating organic resource management, and analyzing and writing the composting and organics sections of Zero Waste plans for a multitude of cities.

#2 Healthy Soil Hero: These nominees are pulling policy levers and opening doors to growth and innovation in the composting space.

- **AWARDEE Senator Catherine Smith Blakespear, California State Senate:** Senator Catherine Blakespear has contributed farsighted and consistent legislative leadership in promoting regenerative agriculture and sustainable food systems. Her bills addressing organic waste diversion, permit streamlining for local composting facilities, and clarification of "compostable" labeling all serve the climate by reducing methane emissions from landfills by diverting organics, and building healthy soils that sequester carbon. As chair of the Senate Environmental Quality committee, she co-convened a joint hearing on Agriculture and the Cap & Invest Program, examining the impact of climate investments on farming communities.

- **Leo Beckerman, Zero Foodprint**: Leo has mobilized over $500,000 to compost projects in San Diego with funds from the SD Community Foundation, SD Businesses, County of San Diego, CDFA, and USDA, alongside many partner organizations. Through his leadership at Zero Foodprint, the Compost Connector Program has bridged a significant gap in our current composting ecosystems while supporting SB1383 Procurement Requirements and facilitating compost adoption for farmers through subsidized compost purchases and spreading services. Leo's work consistently grows out of collaborative relationships with policymakers and municipalities, where he transforms policy goals into concrete benefits for farmers, composters and soils.

San Diego Event: Compost Caravan Celebration

Compost Champion Awards & Nominees (cont.)

- **Ariel Hamburger, County of San Diego:** Ariel is a Land Use/Environmental Planning Manager at the San Diego County Sustainability Office and is leading the San Diego SOILS Program, which provides $20-30k grants for farmers and ranchers looking to implement climate smart land practices in the unincorporated County. Working in partnership with Zero Foodprint, Ariel is leading a larger effort to advance sustainability initiatives that support the County's Regional Decarbonization Framework and Climate Action strategies. Her dedication is providing institutional opportunities for regenerative strategies and building soil health in her jurisdiction, actively expanding the regenerative movement in SD.

#3 Mycelium Connector: These nominees are exceptional at building relationships between essential stakeholders within the compost ecosystem.

- **AWARDEE Sarah Boltwala-Mesina, Inika Small-Earth/Food2Soil:** Sarah has been a long time community compost leader in both San Diego and in the state of California. Her early work supported the first legalization of community compost in the state prior to SB 1383. She runs one of the first small-scale residential collection programs via Food2Soil, which started by diverting food scraps from local hotels and restaurants and has since expanded into a subscription service for local residents to get a bucket for their food scraps, drop them off at designated neighborhood hubs, and receive year-round access to finished compost. Sarah has also offered her expertise to the soil health movement and has participated in countless policy campaigns to support the advancement of community compost. She is, like compost, truly a force of Nature!

- **Christina Ng, Berry Good Food Foundation:** Christina's passion for local, healthy food is exemplified through her work as a food educator. Through the Berry Good Food Foundation, she coordinates cooking classes for people of all ages, to foster relationships between people who eat, local growers, and the wide variety of seasonal produce available in this region. Christina has deep and meaningful connections with a range of community based organizations, and is dedicated to celebrating food as a pathway to human health and interpersonal connection.

- **Leticia Celis, Olivewood Gardens:** Leticia is a strong community health leader and active volunteer. Her introduction to composting was through the Olivewood Gardens Thriving Earth Kitchenista program, where she received training on community composting in 2021. Since then, Leticia has helped with compost rotations along with other groups of Kitchenistas and supports community events through compost activity for children and families. She continues advocating for composting opportunities after seeing the physical and community benefits it has provided her!

#4 Heavy Lifter: These nominees are bringing compost into the mainstream by supporting institutional partnerships that drive increased participation in composting systems.

- **AWARDEE Risa Baron, Republic Services:** Since joining the team at Republic Services, Risa has been championing compost through facility tours, public outreach, collaborations with statewide organizations, and partnerships with city, regional and state representatives. At Otay Sustainability Park, her team has spearheaded collaborations with local institutions, notably the San Diego Padres, the San Diego Convention Center, and the San Diego Airport to establish large scale organics recovery programs that allow for the efficient use of compostable food ware. Beyond turning piles of compost, Risa has been turning the tide towards organics recycling at large, complex institutions, helping to bring compost into the mainstream for people who otherwise may never have thought about it.

San Diego Event: Compost Caravan Celebration

Compost Champion Awards & Nominees (cont.)

- **Michael Wonsidler, County of San Diego Department of Public Works:** Michael's work as the Program Manager for the County of San Diego is driving sizable diversion rates in innovative ways to help expand regional, diversified processing infrastructure. He serves as the North San Diego Recycling Market Development Zone (RMDZ) program administrator, which has awarded over $5M in low-interest loans for facilities processing recyclables including organics. Michael has served many local committees and task forces that drive increased recycling, composting, and food systems initiatives across the county. He fits the definition of a "Heavy Lifter" in every sense of that phrase by providing critical leadership and significant county-based financial investments and resources for successfully implementing SB 1383 and increasing compost utilization on a local and regional level.

- **Burton Ewert, City of San Diego Miramar Greenery:** Burton has been working in organics in San Diego for decades, and has been integral in the SB1383 transition to include food scraps in green bin collection. As part of the Miramar Greenery team, he has supported the implementation of robust contamination reduction strategies to improve the quality of the finished compost produced by the City of San Diego, one of the few cities in California that has a large, robust compost facility. Burton manages a large team that is a center piece of the County's circular organics management plan and operations and he provides immeasurable value to the regional composting systems through his depth of knowledge, long time devotion, and hard working history with compost in San Diego.

#5 Circular Systems Architect: These nominees are dedicated to showing, in practice, how compost is the connective tissue between eaters, healthy soil, healthy food, and healthy communities.

- **AWARDEE Bea Alvarez, Foodshed Cooperative:** In her six years as the Climate Resilience Specialist at Foodshed Cooperative, Bea has leveraged millions of dollars in resources to cultivate more regenerative farming. Bea has facilitated healthy soil adoption for small farms across the region with technical assistance, soil testing services, and financial incentives that have significantly boosted compost application on farms. Bea has been named as a trusted friend and ally to many farmers in San Diego and a strong community champion.

- **Diane Moss, Project New Village:** Diane has reimagined what our local food systems could look like through Project New Village, a resident-led, community-rooted hub that builds stronger neighborhoods, improves the neighborhood food supply chain, stimulates collective investment in better health, and maximizes the impact of investment to address social inequities. In 2010, Diane and her allies advocated to adjust City of San Diego's ordinances, which now reduces fee burden for urban farms built on public lands. As a former CCGS recipient, Diane has supported the clear connection between composting and local food access.

- **Tina Matthias, South Bay Sustainable Communities:** Through her leadership at South Bay Sustainable Communities Network (SBSC), Tina leads efforts in creating 16 neighborhood composting sites, organizing community clean-ups and guided nature hikes, and supporting gardening and zero waste workshops. Tina created the Youth 4 a Sustainable Future, a student-led program that expands across 15 local schools and teaches students to divert organic waste through composting and food-rescue. At the South Bay Community Farm, Tina teaches youth and local community members about regenerative gardening practices.

San Diego Event: Compost Caravan Celebration

Healthy Soil, Healthy Futures Panel

Four experienced panelists guided a conversation of the past, present, and future of the compost movement. Panelists included:

- **Jessica Toth**, Executive Director at Solana Center
- **Leo Beckerman**, CEO at Zero Foodprint and ACP Board Vice President
- **Michael Martinez**, Program Manager at The 11th Hour Project and Founder of LA Compost
- **Kathy Johnson**, Owner of Kellogg Garden Products and ACP Board Member



Each panelist had a unique perspective of the opportunities within the industry; Jessica provided insight from her work in establishing community composting sites, Leo emphasized the needs of end users to get more compost onto soils, Michael pondered the role of philanthropic institutions to provide diversified funding pathways, and Kathy brought a long-time industrial composter perspective. Key observations included the industry's need for diversification and a decentralized approach, increased funding opportunities to connective services such as spreading and blowing, and how to frame our goals to align with different sources of funding. Panelists talked about the growth of the movement since the early days, and how their early starts as compost or food industry practitioners have influenced their perspectives on its growth. Later, they talked about their vision for the industry, where compost is easily accessible and a part of every city driving genuine benefits for communities across the state.



San Diego Event: Compost Caravan Celebration

Logistical Reflections & Improvements:

What Went Well

- **Venue Location and Set Up:** Ranchito Milkyway was the perfect venue for the event, with a beautiful dinner set up and great gathering place for refreshments upon entry. Many attendees noted that the location made the event a unique experience and drove home the themes of the discussions.

- **Food and Beverage Sourcing:** This event prioritized sourcing all food from local vendors from the San Diego area. The dinner showcased delicious fish, tortillas, and produce from seven different local producers that all practice sustainable/regenerative land and business management including **Tunaville**, **Somos Maiz**, **Masienda**, **Ranchito Milkyway**, **Avocado Bliss**, **JR Organics**, and **Sage Mountain**. Working with a local chef, chef **Logan Mitchell from Cellar Door**, was key to sourcing fresh ingredients and maintaining good relationships with vendors. Drinks were provided by donation from several California based beverage companies: **Boochcraft**, **Tractor Beverage**, and **Henwill Gin**. Additional wine was purchased from the grocery store.



- **Zero Waste Dinner:** All plates and cutlery used for the dinner were compostable thanks to our partners at EcoProducts. EcoProducts provided serviceware that has been tested by Republic Services and approved for use in their facility. Republic Services provided clearly labeled receptacles and attendees source-separated all their organics and recyclables, generating almost no landfill waste.



What Could Be Improved

- **Weather Proofing:** The event experienced heavy rains for the first 30 minutes of the award ceremony, and guests had a hard time hearing the description due to the loud rain. Despite our tent accommodations for the dinner being successful, we had not considered the effects on our audio system. Additionally, heavier winds prevented us from setting up the tables ahead of time due to our compostable dishware.

- **Last Minute Preparations:** Organizers could have considered delivery services for last minute preparations including refreshments and printed materials. Too many last minute preparations affected our ability to network at the beginning portion of the event.