



CALHOUN COUNTY

Office of Community Development

Parks & Recreation – Planning – GIS – MSU Extension – Solid Waste
315 West Green Street, Marshall, Michigan 49068 – 269/781-0784

Closing of the Community Compost Center Information Sheet

The Community Compost Center, located on land owned by Calhoun County, was operated by the City of Marshall. The County and the City of Marshall worked together regularly to assess the sustainability of the Community Compost Center. County Administration received an email from Tom Tarkiewicz indicating that the City's budget couldn't sustain the center and initiated a notice to terminate the Community Compost Center Agreement. Neither budget had the amount necessary to run the compost center properly, and Michigan Department of Environmental Quality site visits had revealed that numerous details were not being done according to regulation. Due to regulatory and budget constraints, the City of Marshall and Calhoun County agreed in November 2016 to permanently close the Community Compost Center located at 19646 Division Drive, Marshall. In December, the City of Marshall placed a notice in the Advisor and Shopper to notify the public that the Community Compost Center was permanently closed. All of the compost material has been removed from the location and the registration with the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality was not renewed when it expired in March 2017. The costs to close the compost center were split 50/50 with the City of Marshall based on the Community Compost Center Agreement.

This decision was made for the following reasons:

Cost of operations:

- The annual operating cost of the Community Compost Center was \$45,000. The County paid \$12,000 of that cost which was based on the level of use of the center by county vs City of Marshall residents. No townships or other municipalities contributed to the operation of the compost center.
- The City of Marshall controlled the costs, employment, and hours of operation of the Community Compost Center.
- According to the Calhoun County Solid Waste Plan, the intention of the City of Marshall and Calhoun County partnership was to create a compost center that was self-sustaining through user fees and the sale of compost center material. During its entire operational history, the fees and sale of material never generated enough revenue to allow the compost center to become self-sustaining.
- Compost centers are required to record what material enters and exits the center along with properly managing the material by grinding, turning, screening, and testing the material. Staff is needed to not only load screened compost and woodchips for customers, but to also record information and manage the material at the compost center. Compost that has not been held at the correct temperature can harbor disease and weed seeds. Composting operations require special equipment to grind, process,

and turn the windrows of compost. The Community Compost Center shared equipment with several municipalities across southern Michigan. While making it more affordable to manage the material, it limited each municipality's ability to access the equipment on a frequent basis.

Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) regulations:

- Compost centers with over 200 cubic yards of material are required by the DEQ to be registered and follow regulations.
- Yard clippings are not supposed to accumulate for a period of over 3 years unless it can be demonstrated that the amount of yard clippings and compost transferred off-site in a calendar year is more than 75% by weight and volume the amount of yard waste that was on-site at the beginning of the calendar year.
- Compost center operators must keep records on the volumes of material accepted at the center, the volume of material such as compost and woodchips transferred off-site each month, and records that the operation is being performed in a manner that prevents nuisances and minimizes anaerobic conditions which includes records of carbon-to-nitrogen ratios, the amount of leaves and the amount of grass in tons or cubic yards, temperature and moisture readings of the piles, and lab analysis of finished product.
- The City of Marshall and Calhoun County could not afford to operate the compost center at a level compliant with DEQ regulations.

Accepted material:

- According to the DEQ yard clippings are limited to the following items: leaves, grass clippings, vegetable or other garden debris, shrubbery, brush, and tree trimmings less than 4 ft. in length and 2 in. in diameter.
- Items such as tree trimmings longer than 4 ft. and greater than 2 in. diameter, stumps, and treated lumber are not considered compost center material.
- Due to limited staffing, residents left material that was not accepted at the compost center.
- The center was never intended to be used for commercial purposes.

Movement of material collected at the center:

- The volume of material coming into the center was greater than the amount leaving. The center had over 3 years' worth of material at the site. Woodchips have a short shelf life and once they reach a certain stage of decomposition, they are not valued for landscaping or fuel purposes. Many of the woodchips at the center dated back to 2011.

Location:

- The Community Compost Center was located in a former gravel pit putting it close to the water table and near surface water. Compost is full of nutrients and functions as a fertilizer. Run-off from the compost piles or nutrients leaching into the soil with the rainwater could cause water contamination.

Currently, three registered compost centers are located in Calhoun County and are operated by the Cities of Albion, Battle Creek, and Marshall. These municipalities have rules and restrictions on who may use their facilities and what material is accepted. A current list of all registered compost centers in Michigan is available on the Michigan DEQ website http://www.michigan.gov/documents/deq/DEQ-WHMD-List_Registered_Compost_Sites_230193_7.pdf. There are several privately owned registered compost centers in the State of Michigan and their contact information is available in the above list.

Albion, Battle Creek, and Springfield residents also have yard waste pick-up services through their municipalities' single hauler contracts. Yard waste subscription service is available in some areas. Please check with your trash hauler to see if they offer that service.

Residents who wish to burn their yard waste or have compost piles of less than 200 cubic yards should verify if these practices are allowable through their local ordinances.



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