



# Snohomish County “Foodcycler” 2013 RSA Organics Outreach

## Final Report





## 2013 Snohomish County RSA Organics Outreach - Final Report

### Campaign Summary

In 2013, Waste Management created a multi-faceted organics outreach campaign targeting residents of Snohomish County. The goal of the campaign was to use creative, collaborative strategies to increase food scrap and food soiled paper composting rates among Waste Management customers in Snohomish County - and more broadly, to improve the quality of curbside compost, decrease compost stream contamination and raise awareness about the local home-to-garden compost “loop.”

Waste Management partnered with regional compost stakeholders - Snohomish County, Cedar Grove, Washington State University (WSU), King County and Seattle Public Utilities to develop and carry out five distinct organics outreach strategies (outlined below) in Snohomish County throughout the year.

### Background

About one-third of all garbage sent to the landfill contains food scraps, yard debris and food-soiled paper—and all of these are compostable in the compost cart at curbside. As part of the 2013 Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (WUTC) Revenue Sharing Agreement, Waste Management partnered with Snohomish County to help increase food scrap and food soiled paper composting rates among Snohomish County WUTC customers.

The challenge is that food-soiled paper and food scrap composting is still a relatively new concept. Research shows that people feel daunted by starting this behavior, and don’t fully understand why it’s important. Waste Management wanted a campaign to show that simple steps make a big difference - both for the local Snohomish County economy and the environment.

### Campaign Objectives

To help Snohomish County WUTC residents make the connection between the home-to-garden compost “loop”, Waste Management created a campaign with four main objectives:

- **Objective 1:** Increase the number of Snohomish County WUTC residents that participate in curbside composting by inspiring at least 500 residents to take an “I’m a Foodcycler” pledge to compost food scraps, food-soiled paper and yard debris.
- **Objective 2:** Make it easy for residents to start composting at home by distributing at least 500 kitchen food scrap containers.
- **Objective 3:** Raise awareness about the local home-to-garden compost “loop” by encouraging residents to take the pledge and show their commitment to composting by placing an “I’m a Foodcycler” decal on their curbside compost cart.

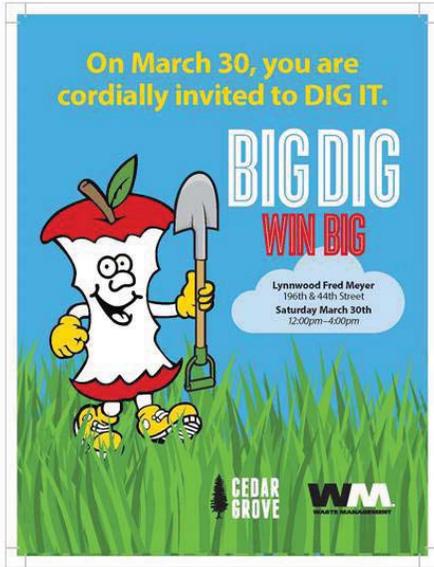
- **Objective 4:** Engage and educate Snohomish County residents about the value of compost and improve the quality of curbside compost through innovative events, partnerships, earned/paid media and direct mail.

**Compost Days - Big Dig Event:** Waste Management kicked off the gardening season with a community-wide event to engage and educate Snohomish County WUTC residents about the value of compost as well as improve the quality of curbside compost. Dubbed the “Big Dig,” the campaign brought a sense of offbeat fun and excitement to composting food scraps and food soiled-paper.

In the Big Dig, WUTC Snohomish County residents used clues to find 30 “Corey the Compostable Apple Core” posters hidden at Snohomish County locations including retailers, Washington State University Extension campus and community gardens. Snohomish County residents who found Corey emailed a hidden code to partner Cedar Grove to receive a free bag of compost as well as education on how to compost food scraps, food soiled-paper and yard debris.

Participants were then entered into a contest to win a spot in the final Big Dig event, where 40 Snohomish County WUTC contestants dug through a school bus sized pile of compost for buried treasure in the parking lot of retail partner Fred Meyer in Lynnwood. To drive participation and campaign awareness, a Big Dig direct mail postcard was sent to 32,500 Snohomish County WUTC residents, and multiple media outlets covered the campaign including KING-TV, Snohomish County community papers and blogs. Additionally, a robust paid media campaign featuring gardening guru Ciscoe Morris helped raise awareness in Snohomish County and Fred Meyer Lynnwood promoted the Big Dig event and compost discounts with in store point of purchase displays.





**Impact:** During the campaign a total of 103,100 bags of compost were sold, 34,922 people visited the Compost Days website, 18,979 people took the composting quiz on the campaign website, 1,115 compost coupons were redeemed from the campaign website and 40 people signed up to dig at the Lynnwood Big Dig event.



Participants of all ages had a great time at the Big Dig.

**All You Can Shovel Events:** In May and again in August, Waste Management partnered with Cedar Grove to host an inaugural one-day “All You Can Shovel” event at the Cedar Grove Everett composting facility, where 32,500 WUTC Snohomish County residents received an invitation postcard to pick up as much free compost that they could squeeze into the back of their vehicle.

Cedar Grove provided nearly a football field of compost for residents and at the end of the day only a few hundred yards were left. Over 600 households attended the two events lining up between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. to fill their cars, trucks, and containers with Cedar Grove compost. The day had a festive feel with happy customers driving home with free compost for gardening.

**Impact:** Between the two events, 620 customers drove to the Cedar Grove Everett facility and dug over 1,000 cubic yards of bulk compost. Customers came to the event from as far away as Gold Bar, Sultan and Monroe, and some rented trailers and pick-up trucks for the event.



Postcard advertising an All You Can Shovel event



The compost pile – before and after the event



Happy customers pick up free compost



**I'm a Foodcycler Campaign:** Waste Management created an innovative campaign called “I’m a Foodcycler” where all Snohomish County WUTC customers received an “I’m a Foodcycler” thank you direct mail piece with education on how to start composting food scraps, yard debris and food soiled paper and coupons for free compost including a compost “punch card.” The mailing also provided a big carrot to start composting - a free kitchen food scrap container would be mailed to the first 500 Snohomish County WUTC customers that went to Waste Management’s page and took the “Foodcycler Pledge.”



A kitchen container with an “I’m a Foodcycler” decal

**WASTE MANAGEMENT**  
17100 Aurora, Suite 100 • Everett, WA 98203

**Pledge to be a Foodcycler and receive a FREE kitchen food scrap container and compostable bag sample! DETAILS INSIDE!**

**Thanks for foodcycling!**

**Can you help close the FOODCYCLING LOOP?**

**Take the I'm a Foodcycler Pledge and get a FREE kitchen food scrap container**

Go to [www.wmfoodcycling.com](http://www.wmfoodcycling.com) and take the I'm a Foodcycler Pledge and we will mail you a FREE kitchen food scrap container and compostable bag sample.  
\*Not fast—the opportunity is for the first 500 pledges only!

**Stuff that is compostable**

**FOOD**  
Meat, seafood, dairy, fish, vegetables, shells, bones, pants, rice, spaghetti, noodles, bread, grains and crackers.

**PLANTS, FLOWERS & YARD DEBRIS**  
Plants and flowers, grass clippings, shrub, branches, weeds, jacks to hollyhock and natural holiday trees.

**FOOD-SOILED PAPER & SHREDDED PAPER**  
Pizza boxes, coffee grounds and filters, tea bags, unused cardboard, coffee paper filters, kitchen towels, paper napkins as well as torn shredded paper.

**Foodcycling is an easy way to reduce your garbage footprint.**

**First Step: SELECT A FOOD SCRAP CATCHER**  
- Stylish compost pail and compostable bag  
- Paper bag  
- Reusable container such as an ice bucket or galp pitcher  
- Newspaper: Wrap the scraps and put that in the compost cart

**Second Step: FILL CONTAINER**  
- Place food scraps and food-soiled napkins and paper towels in your kitchen container.

**Final Step: EMPTY, CLEAN AND REPEAT**  
- Empty the collected food scraps into your curbside compost cart. Your compost cart will be picked up on your next collection day.

**Why does Foodcycling matter, anyway? WASTE MANAGEMENT**

60% of all garbage sent to the Cedar Hills Regional Landfill contains food scraps, yard debris and food soiled paper—and all of these items are compostable in your curbside compost cart.

Compostable materials can have a second life as compost and are a great addition to your garden soil. But they need your help! When you combine your food scraps and food-soiled paper with your yard debris, you reduce the amount of compostable material going to the landfill and help create a local Foodcycle.

**HELP CLOSE THE FOODCYCLING LOOP!**

1. Buy or grow locally produced food.
2. Eat food.
3. Place food scraps and food-soiled paper in your compost cart.
4. Food scraps go to local compost facility.
5. Food scraps, food-soiled paper and yard debris transform into nutrient-rich compost.
6. Compost is used by local gardeners and farmers to create more food—you can use compost too!
7. Repeat!

**Impact:** Participation in the campaign was enormous.



**Waste Management Snohomish County**

**ARE YOU READY TO TAKE THE FOODCYCLING PLEDGE?**

Did you know that nearly 1/3 of all garbage sent to the landfill is food scraps, yard debris and food-soiled compostable paper?

Now's your chance to do something about it!

When you put your food scraps and yard debris in your curbside compost cart, you help close a local Foodcycling loop: Your food scraps and yard debris are collected and delivered to an area compost facility, processed into compost, then sold regionally at home and garden stores and used by local farms.

**UPDATE!** We have had great response to this promotion and the 500 kitchen containers have been claimed. We hope you'll still take the pledge and help close the Foodcycling loop!

**I'm a Foodcycler**  
www.foodcycling.com

**Take the Pledge**

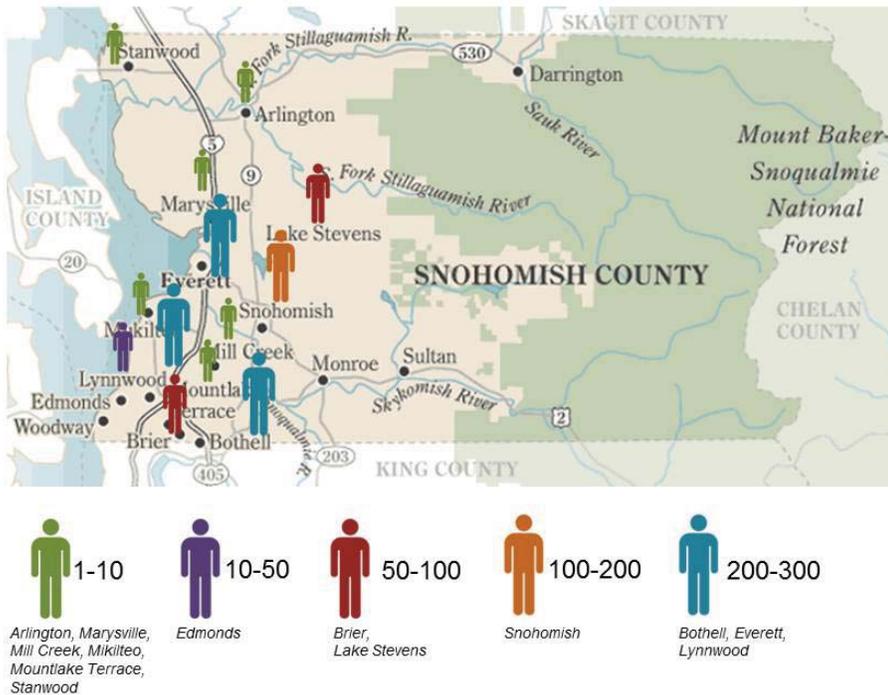
**Foodcycling Resources:**

- Meet the Foodcyclers
- Photo/Media Release Form
- Foodcycling Campaign
- Compostable Bag Guide
- Compost Guidelines

In the first two days after the “I’m a Foodcycler” direct mail was distributed, 2,200 WUTC residents went online and took the Foodcycler pledge - an 8.4 percent participation rate. By the end of the campaign, a total of 2,729 residents took the pledge. Due to the overwhelming positive response from residents, Waste Management partnered with WSU to offer an additional 2,219 pledge takers the opportunity to pick up a free kitchen container. The pick-up events were held at the WSU Extension Office in Everett, and staffed by WSU gardening specialists and volunteers from the WSU sustainability stewards program. During the course of a week, a total of 1,139 containers were picked up (1,073 by WUTC Snohomish County residents and 66 by additional pledge takers) and an additional 11 containers were mailed to Snohomish County WUTC residents who were unable to make the events. A grand total of 1,650 kitchen containers were distributed residents.

<b>Total Foodcycler Pledges:</b>	<b>2,729</b>
Kitchen containers mailed to WUTC Snohomish County pledge takers:	511
Kitchen containers picked up by Snohomish County WUTC pledge takers at WSU events:	1,073
Kitchen containers picked up by additional pledge-takers at WSU events:	66
<b>Total kitchen containers distributed:</b>	<b>1,650</b>
<b>Total containers left after promotion:</b>	<b>1,080</b>

**WM Customers Who Picked Up Kitchen Containers (By City)**



**I'm a Foodcycler Photo Contest:** Residents that took the pledge received an "I'm a Foodcycler" decal to affix onto their curbside compost cart. They were encouraged to place the decal on their compost cart, snap and submit a photo to be entered to win a gift card to a local Snohomish County nursery.



"I'm a Foodcycler" decal and photo contest participants



### Additional partnerships with WSU:

- Support for WSU Sustainability Stewards volunteer program (formerly WSU Carbon Masters) by advertising their program in 2 regional newspapers.
- Support for WSU Snohomish County Agricultural Compost Research and Outreach Project by sponsoring delivery of 1,708 cubic yards of compost to 36 local farms.

## Recap of Campaign Results

**Objective 1: Increase the number of Snohomish County WUTC residents that participate in curbside composting by inspiring at least 500 residents to take the “I’m a Foodcycler” pledge to compost food scraps, food-soiled paper and yard debris.**

**Result:** 2,729 Snohomish County WUTC residents took a public commitment to compost by going online and taking the “I’m a Foodcycler” pledge -exceeding the goal by 5 times.

**Objective 2: Make it easy for residents to start composting at home by distributing at least 500 kitchen food scrap containers.**

**Result:** Originally kitchen pails were only offered to the first 500 Snohomish County WUTC residents who took the pledge. With the overwhelming Foodcycler pledge response, Waste Management was able to identify funds to give every resident that took the pledge an opportunity to get a free kitchen container by partnering with Washington State University to distribute the additional 2,219 kits in a weeklong kitchen giveaway event in late October 2013. Ultimately, a total of 1,650 Snohomish County WUTC residents received a kitchen kit through the promotion.

**Objective 3: Raise awareness about the local home-to-garden compost “loop” by encouraging residents to take the pledge and show their commitment to composting by placing an “I’m a Foodcycler” decal on their curbside compost cart.**

**Result:** Within the first week of taking the pledge, Snohomish County WUTC residents showed off their composting pride by sending in fun and engaging photos of their compost cart decorated with their new Foodcycling decal.

**Objective 4: Engage and educate Snohomish County WUTC residents about the value of compost and improve the quality of curbside compost through innovative partnerships, community events, earned/paid media and direct mail.**

**Result:**

- The three community events attracted more than 600 Snohomish County WUTC residents to engage in composting.
- KING-TV, KOMO-TV, Snohomish County community blogs and papers promoted the campaign earning 2,671,384 impressions.
- Paid media supported the campaign with an additional 11 million impressions.



- 4,922 people visited the Compost Days website during the campaign.
- 18,979 people took the composting quiz on the campaign website.
- 1,115 Cedar Grove compost coupons were redeemed from the campaign website.
- During the campaign, Cedar Grove reported that bulk compost bag sales were up by 31 percent and bag sales by 12 percent. The total increase was equivalent to 103,100 additional bags sold (compared to 2012).