



**Press Release
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Grant to Help Reduce Agricultural Waste in the Salinas Valley

Local Partnership to Implement Solutions for Managing Food Waste and Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions

(Salinas, CA) The Salinas Valley is known as the “Salad Bowl of the World” for its prolific agricultural production; much of the leafy greens and other fresh produce consumed in the U.S. are grown, packaged, and shipped from this region. The Salinas Valley Solid Waste Authority (a.k.a. Salinas Valley Recycles) serves businesses and residents located in the heart of the Salinas Valley by providing sustainable, long-term waste management and resource recovery systems for its member (public) agencies. Salinas Valley Recycles (SVR) has been awarded -- and their Board of Directors have accepted -- over \$1.34 million in grant funding from the Department of Resource, Recycling, and Recovery (CalRecycle) to reduce organic materials (including food scraps, yard waste, wood waste, etc.) from entering the landfill, and recover edible food to feed those who are in need, thereby reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

The cooperative Grant project is estimated to divert more than 22,000 tons of waste from the landfill during the three-year grant term by upgrading current operations and infrastructure at Johnson Canyon Landfill to include a full-scale food waste composting operation, and de-packaging equipment that separates non-marketable organic material from its packaging to be composted. The project also allocates approximately \$73,000 toward the purchase of a new fuel-efficient, refrigerated truck for the Food Bank for Monterey County. This truck will rescue edible food that would otherwise end up in the landfill, and distribute it to residents in need within Monterey County.

The project is expected to produce approximately 38,000 tons of compost and organic products, resulting in a GHG reduction of 7,085 Metric Tons of Carbon Dioxide equivalents (MTC02e) during the grant term. Currently, no full-scale food waste composting facilities exist in the Salinas Valley. The construction of such a facility, together with technology that separates non-marketable organic produce from its packaging, and an edible food rescue program, will allow SVR to significantly increase the diversion of food waste generated by local farmers, businesses and residents from being landfilled.

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The Grant’s food rescue component consists of purchasing a new refrigerated box truck for the Food Bank to increase food rescue opportunities in the Salinas Valley. The Food Bank will use the truck to collect food from existing and new agricultural and retail donors, and will deliver to people in disadvantaged communities throughout the Salinas Valley.

In 2015, the Food Bank experienced a fire and lost its entire fleet of trucks. “Before the incident we were struggling to meet collection demands due to insufficient capacity. The purchase of the refrigerated truck will help us with our capacity needs, as well as allow the recovered food to feed those who need it the most and prevent it from being landfilled,” says Melissa Kendrick, Executive Director of the Food Bank for Monterey County. The Food Bank estimates that the new truck will enable them to divert an additional 900 tons of edible food from the landfill over the term of the Grant.

Per SVR’s 2008 Waste Characterization Study, food waste is approximately 18% of the overall waste stream at Johnson Canyon Landfill. Based on SVR’s fiscal year (FY) 2016-17 solid waste tonnage, approximately 199,457 tons were landfilled, of which more than 35,000 tons is estimated to be food waste. Methane emissions resulting from the decomposition of organic waste in landfills are a significant source of GHG emissions contributing to global climate change. Recent California legislation pertaining to regulations for management of organic waste, Assembly Bill (AB) 1826 (Mandatory Commercial Organics Recycling) and Senate Bill (SB) 1383 (Short-Lived Climate Pollutants & Methane Emissions Reduction Act), are driving changes in the way organic waste material is to be handled. Reducing organics being landfilled is a logical solution to meet these mandates.

“The grant funding will provide an organic recovery system, the first of its kind in Salinas Valley, that will help achieve compliance with AB 1826 and SB 1383, as it will provide outlets for all food waste generating sectors – from industrial to residential,” says Patrick Mathews, SVR’s Chief Administrative Officer.

The purpose of CalRecycle’s Organics Grant Program is to reduce statewide GHG emissions by expanding existing capacity or establishing new composting and anaerobic digestion facilities in California that will reduce the amount of organic materials sent to landfills. This grant program supports the State’s GHG emissions reduction goals, and 75% diversion goal by 2020. For the FY 2016-17 competitive grant funding cycle, CalRecycle allocated \$24 million for composting and anaerobic digestions projects and received 35 eligible grant applications, totaling over \$88 million in funding requests.

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SVR's application was one of ten applications selected for funding, receiving a total of \$1.34 million of the available grant funds.

The Grant project supports SVR's Mission, Vision and Values by providing sustainable and cost-effective community-based waste reduction programs. It also supports SVR's Three-Year Strategic Plan Goal to Select and Implement Facilities (e.g., Salinas Area Materials Recovery Center) and Programs that Lead to Achievement of at Least 75% Waste Diversion. The grant funding will directly help expand the organics recovery program in the Salinas Valley to divert food and packaged agricultural produce from the landfill.

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More about Salinas Valley Recycles:

The Salinas Valley Solid Waste Authority, a.k.a. Salinas Valley Recycles (SVR), is a joint powers agency made up of the following local governments: Monterey County (eastern half of the unincorporated county), and the cities of Gonzales, Greenfield, King City, Salinas, and Soledad.

SVR is responsible for providing secure long-term resource recovery services and solid waste disposal to all of its members in an environmentally sound and cost-effective manner. To accomplish this goal, SVR currently owns and manages three closed and one active landfill and two transfer stations, and oversees the operation of these facilities that serve its 2,400 square mile service territory. SVR is also responsible for overseeing future expansion of waste and recycling programs and infrastructure and landfill services to meet the area's long-term solid waste disposal needs.