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Executive Kittleman announces Alpha Ridge Landfill compost facility will double its capacity and service

ELLICOTT CITY, MD – Howard County Executive Allan H. Kittleman today announced a significant expansion to the county's compost facility at the Alpha Ridge Landfill in Marriottsville. In this phase of the composting program, the county is more than doubling its ability to collect food scraps and produce HoCoGro organic products. This program responds to increased community demand for composting resources and makes the county's organic recycling services more efficient.

"The fact that we can turn household food scraps into reusable organic products, such as compost, mulch and topsoil, protects the environment and benefits our residents," said Kittleman. "The bunkers we have added at the landfill provide the capacity we need to service more of the county, including advanced technology to manage the compost process, and move us substantially toward the goal of county-wide curbside food scrap collection and processing."

The facility has added 10 concrete bunkers with state of the art moisture and odor control systems to house food scrap and yard trim collections. Previously, the composting was managed in aerated windrows or above ground "piles" with the capacity of only four bunkers. The new processing facility procedures will be refined during the annual surge of Fall yard waste collections. Additional improvements will include new infrastructure enhancements such as roadways, enhanced water pumps and a building to house the grinding machinery.

Beginning in the Spring of 2019, curbside food scrap collections will be offered in three additional collection zones, an increase from 14,000 homes in ElkrIDGE and Clarksville to approximately 30,000 total households. The county is currently reviewing collections data to determine the additional zones.

Ben Grumbles, Secretary of the Maryland Department of the Environment, told the crowd gathered this morning that, "Howard County continues to lead the state in environmental leadership. We are so proud to be here to see this wonderful pilot scale up and continue to be a great example of citizen-centered environmental leadership that turns waste into wealth."

Composting is a multistep process. Collected materials are first put through a grinder. Then the grindings are wetted and left to "cook" for 45 days, which involves turning and mixing the material. Next the compost is cured for 60 days, after which it can be screened of contaminants and turned into HoCoGro organic products for use on county projects, as well as for retail sales to residents, landscapers and wholesale customers.

“It may be surprising to some that composting is not only good for the environment and returns local organic waste to be repurposed in our community, but it is economical for the county as well,” said Mark DeLuca, Chief of the Bureau of Environmental Services in the Department of Public Works. “It is cheaper for us to process this material than to have it hauled away as waste. Plus, we gain our own landscape supplies to use on county projects such as schools, parks and roads.”

The county composting project began in 2012 as a pilot program for about 5,000 homes and was doubled in 2013 based on its success. The county also currently collects food scraps from seven county schools. Officials estimate that composting diverts hundreds of tons of material annually from winding up in the landfill.

HoCoGro blended topsoil, undyed mulch, and compost material is available for sale at the landfill. Products are sold by the cubic yard and there is a list of contractors who will deliver the materials in bulk for an additional fee. More information about the products and distribution is found online at <https://www.howardcountymd.gov/Departments/Public-Works/Bureau-Of-Environmental-Services/Alpha-Ridge-Landfill/WoodWaste-Drop-Off-Area>

The announcement made at Alpha Ridge Landfill this morning can be viewed online at <https://youtu.be/HrF5f7JiCpQ>.