

# AB 1594 (Williams)

## Yard Waste Composting

### SUMMARY

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AB 1594 removes the recycling credit local governments receive for landfilling yard trimmings and other green waste, thus eliminating a leading barrier to the expansion of the state's valuable composting and bioenergy industries.

### BACKGROUND

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Federal law requires landfills to be covered at the end of each workday to prevent odors and insects. While landfills are traditionally covered with soil, states are allowed to approve the use of other material as Alternative Daily Cover (ADC).

Existing law requires local governments to "divert" 50% of all solid waste from disposal at landfills or incinerators, but allows yard trimmings to be counted as diverted when sent to a landfill for use as ADC. This exemption creates a perverse incentive to use green materials for ADC instead of recovering the material and returning it to the soil through composting.

There are several ADC materials available, (including treated auto shredder waste, tarps, specially designed foams, and construction and demolition materials), but residential yard trimmings (often referred to as "green waste") is the most commonly used ADC material. According to CalRecycle, green waste accounted for 47% of all ADC in the State in 2012. The next closest material used was construction and demolition waste at about 19% of all ADC.

When residents take the effort to separate their yard trimmings into a separate container, they expect that material to be composted, but they are likely unaware that that material might very well be sent to the same landfill as their garbage. This practice weakens the integrity of California's recycling goals by misleadingly treating landfill disposal as "recycling," undermines efforts to promote beneficial uses of organic waste, and contributes in a significant way to global warming by producing powerful methane emissions that cannot be completely captured even in the most state-of-the-art landfills.

Landfilling compostable materials is counterproductive

to the State's goal of cutting greenhouse gas emissions and recycle 75% of its waste by 2020. Even in the best managed landfills, green waste decomposes in an oxygen-deprived environment, which leads to the generation of methane, a potent and short-lived greenhouse gas. CARB estimates that the methane emitted from landfills amounts to a staggering 6.72 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent – or about 20% of the State's methane emissions. The landfilling of organic waste also generates significant water and air quality impacts, as well as long-term financial liabilities. Composting not only avoids those impacts, but also enhances the quality of soils through the introduction of organic matter, prevents soil erosion, reduces the need for chemical fertilizers and pesticides, and significantly increases water retention at a time when we need it most.

CalRecycle estimates that recovering the organic materials through composting and anaerobic digestion can create 14,000 new jobs in the State by 2020. However, industry leaders have identified the use of recovered yard trimmings and other green materials as ADC at landfills as a leading impediment to the expansion of a robust composting industry in California.

California is one of the only states to allow the use of green waste as landfill cover and the only state to count cover material as diverted—nearly half the states in the country have banned the landfilling of this material all together. Eliminating this wasteful practice will help the State meet its environmental goals, support the growth of agriculture, and create jobs.

### THE BILL

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AB 1594 specifies that by Jan 1, 2020, green waste used as ADC will no longer constitute diversion through recycling. In order to provide local jurisdictions some flexibility, they may apply to Cal Recycle for a two-year extension if they have trouble meeting their diversion requirements.

## SUPPORT

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- Californians Against Waste (co-sponsor)
- California Compost Coalition (co-sponsor)
- Agromin
- Association of Compost Producers
- Bioenergy Association of California
- Biodegradable Products Council
- Breathe California
- CR&R Environmental Services
- California Coastal Protection Network
- California Climate and Agricultural Network
- California Energy Biomass Alliance
- California League of Conservation Voters
- California Organics Recycling Council
- California Resource Recovery Association
- Center for Biological Diversity
- City of Thousand Oaks
- City and County of San Francisco
- Clean Power Campaign
- CleanWorld
- Coalition for Clean Air
- Community Alliance with Family Farmers
- Costa Mesa Sanity District
- County of Santa Barbara
- Ecology Center
- Environment California
- Frank M. Booth Design Build Company
- Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives
- Global Green USA
- GrassRoots Recycling Network
- Green Waste Recovery
- Greenaction for Health & Environmental Justice
- Integrated Waste Management Consulting
- Los Angeles Alliance for New Economy
- Mayor of Los Angeles, Eric Garcetti
- Napa Recycling & Waste Services
- Napa Recycling Compost
- Natural Resources Defense Council
- Nature Works, LLC
- Northern California Recycling Association
- Northern Recycling Compost
- Novamont North America
- Peabody Engineering
- Planning and Conservation League
- Quackenbush Mt. Compost
- Recology
- Sierra Club California
- Sonoma Compost Co.
- South Bayside Waste Management Authority
- Tracy Delta compost

- US Composting Council
- Upper Valley Recycling Compost
- Vasko Electric, Inc.
- Z-Best Composting

## OPPOSITION

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- City of Diamond Bar
- City of Monrovia
- Los Angeles County Solid Waste Management Committee/Integrated Waste Management Task Force
- Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County <sup>\*unless amended</sup>

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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