EPA Recognizes Outstanding Food Recovery Challenge Participants

WASHINGTON - Today, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recognized the accomplishments of 13 organizations and businesses participating in EPA’s Food Recovery Challenge.

In 2015, more than 800 governments, businesses and organizations participated in EPA’s Food Recovery Challenge. Participants include organizations such as grocers, restaurants, educational institutions and sports and entertainment venues, who together kept more than 690,000 tons of food from being wasted. These efforts reduced carbon emissions equivalent to taking approximately 86,000 cars off the road for a year and saved businesses up to $35 million in avoided waste disposal fees.

“The waste reduction efforts of this year’s award winners, as well as all Food Recovery Challenge participants and endorsers, are leading the way for the United States to meet the national goal to cut food loss and waste in half by 2030,” said Mathy Stanislaus, Assistant Administrator for EPA’s Office of Land and Emergency Management. “These Food Recovery Challenge award winners are reducing food loss and waste within their communities to make America a healthier, more sustainable nation. They are leading by example and have reduced their climate footprint, helped communities and achieved cost savings by taking actions based on EPA’s Food Recovery Hierarchy and sustainable materials management best practices.”

In the United States, wasted food carries significant economic and environmental costs. Food accounts for the largest share of the municipal waste stream, with roughly 77 billion pounds discarded each year. The estimated value of food that goes uneaten each year is $161.6 billion, costing the average family up to $1,500. Uneaten food and other organic materials in landfills decompose and generate methane, a significantly harmful greenhouse gas. Landfills are one of the largest sources of methane emissions produced from human activity.

To reduce their food waste, Food Recovery Challenge participants use creative practices such as:

- Recovering food from farmers’ markets
- Creating food waste volunteer programs in high schools
- Giving college students the option to choose what goes on their plates
- Using tools to improve portion control and meal forecasting
- Adding infrastructure to more efficiently distribute perishable produce

EPA recognizes Food Recovery Challenge participants and endorsers with awards in two categories: data-driven and narrative. The data-driven award recipients achieved the highest percent increases in their sector comparing year to year data. Narrative award winners excelled in the areas of source reduction, leadership, innovation, education and outreach and endorsement.

Northeast Recycling Council

Narrative Category Winner, Endorsers

Through its food scrap management work, the Northeast Recycling Council (NERC) provides technical assistance, trainings, and resources advancing wasted food reduction, recovery, and
composting. NERC works with communities, residents, schools, and businesses around the Northeast. In 2015, NERC provided technical assistance resulting in food scrap composting at Jay Peak Resort’s five full-service restaurants and at four schools in Southern Vermont, presented on food scrap management at two conferences and on two webinars, and published an article on food scrap composting at schools. Through its email bulletin, social media, and other avenues, NERC’s outreach promoting EPA’s Food Recovery Hierarchy and the Food Recovery Challenge has reached thousands.

“NERC is very committed to advancing wasted food reduction, recovery, and composting throughout the Northeast. NERC is well known and regarded for its work around the Northeast due to its staff expertise, demonstrated success with various projects, events, technical assistance, resource material development, and speaking engagements. This multi-faceted approach serves to engage a wide range of people; whether it is through hands-on meetings and technical assistance or through its presentations and written materials, NERC successfully gains its audience attention.” - Robert C. Isner, Director, Waste Engineering and Enforcement Division, Bureau of Materials Management and Compliance Assurance, Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection and NERC Board President