



Testimony to Montgomery County Council - for Hearing July 21, 2016

On Bill 28-16 Solid Waste (Trash) - Strategic Plan to Advance Composting, Compost Use and Food Waste Diversion

By Kit Gage, President, Friends of Sligo Creek

Friends of Sligo Creek (FOSC) supports this important bill. We agree that the effort to remove 70% of the waste stream from landfill is very important, and targeting the removal of food waste is (sorry) the low hanging fruit to achieve this goal. As one of the pinch points is a market for the composted material, it is critical to link the product with a good use.

We completely agree that composted food waste applied to turf is a lovely solution. One of the most difficult dual pieces of this effort is making turf more absorptive and at the same time reducing use of pesticides and inorganic fertilizers to turf. This bill, facilitating use of composted food waste, can help address both sides of this need. Composted turf improves soil health and fertilizes is, reducing or eliminating the need (or perceived need) for fertilizers and pesticides.

FOSC long has supported relatively cheap, simple and replicable stormwater mitigation efforts to facilitate the MS4 requirements. Compost is recommended for DEP's RainScapes projects because it absorbs more water than soil and as a soil amendment, it improves the health of plants. Also if the County produces food waste based compost locally, they could have another and very rich and complimentary (to composted leaves) soil amendment source for their green infrastructure projects, to help meet the MS4 permit.

Friends of Sligo Creek understands this problem from the effects on the park and particularly on Sligo Creek. Because there is so much impervious surface in the county, and what is not impervious is hard surface turf that doesn't function well to absorb rainwater, we see the effects in the creek of flooding during storms, and drought in between. Further the misapplication of inorganic fertilizers and overuse of pesticides is greatly damaging to water quality and survival of aquatic life. If this bill is well implemented, it

will help turn people toward a healthier turf that supports more wildlife in itself, and absorbs stormwater better. And then the effect downstream will be a healthier creek and watershed in general.

Application of compost to turf is well documented in the literature (and in my personal experience) as greatly improving the tilth of the soil, and the absorption by turf of stormwater. If the county sets up or contracts for effective food waste composting, and makes it easily available, the result will be a huge win for the county in its many faceted effort to improve the environment.

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Kit Gage has been president of Friends of Sligo Creek since April 2014. She has been active with the FOSC Stormwater Committee since 2005. She became a Master Watershed Steward thru the Anne Arundel County program and then helped co-found and co-direct the National Capital Region Watershed Stewards Academy. She received a Horticulture Certificate from the Graduate School USA, and was honored at the H2O Summit this spring.

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