



Down to Brass Tacks

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE BRASS TACKS INITIATIVE



The SMSC provides a Household Organics Recycling kit to residents of Scott County for the collection of food waste.

Business Spotlight: SMSC Organics Recycling Facility

Written by Meredith Mayer

Since opening in 2011, the Shakopee Mdwakanton Sioux Community (SMSC) Organics Recycling Facility has grown to be a fully functioning compost site working at max capacity for the past few years. This facility was started because of the Dakota people's cultural tradition of "caring for the next seven generations," leaving the world a better place than they found it. Guided by the principles and values of the Dakota people, the SMSC's Organics Recycling Facility plays a crucial role in ensuring a cleaner and greener future for generations of Minnesotans.

Erin Skelly, Manager of SMSC Compost Operations, has worked at the facility since 2017 and has seen its impact and growth. When the facility first opened, it only accepted yard waste. "When they added in food waste and opened it up to anyone, it really started growing in capacity significantly," said Skelly.

Skelly outlines the composting process as a six-step routine:

1. Materials. Food, yard, and wood waste are brought in, primarily by commercial companies, and charged per ton.
2. Inspection. Loads are checked for contamination such as glass, metal, and plastics.
3. Processing. Acceptable waste is ground and blended with controlled moisture for optimal composting.
4. Windrows. The mixture is placed in windrows—long piles about 10 feet tall and 500 feet long—to compost for 70-90 days. It must reach 131°F for at least 15 days and be turned five times.
5. Curing. The compost then rests for 1-3 months to finish the decomposition process and stabilize carbon.
6. Screening. The compost is sifted into three sizes: the finished compost is separated, medium/large materials are returned to windrows, and any remaining contaminants are removed. *(continued on page 3)*

In This Issue

**BUSINESS
SPOTLIGHT**

.....

BTI UPDATES

.....

**VOLUNTEER
OPPORTUNITIES**

.....

Contact us:
info@thebrasstacks.org
 P.O. Box 192
 New Prague, MN 56071
www.thebrasstacks.org

BTI Updates



DOZINKY DAY, NEW PRAGUE

Saturday, September 21 | 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

BTI will be participating in the New Prague Dozinky festival again this year! Stop by the booth to talk trash and food waste and to do a make-and-take project (while supplies last).



FALL HIGHWAY CLEAN-UP

Friday, September 27 | 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

BTI adopted a two-mile section of MN 13 near Shakopee from 282 to Fairlawn Ave. We are excited to serve our community through this program! We are responsible for cleaning up litter along this section twice a year (fall and spring). If you would like to help, please email info@thebrasstacks.org to be added to the volunteer list.



JOIN US!

The Brass Tacks Initiative is seeking volunteers for the following committees to help us continue our mission to support sustainable practices in the food stream through research, education, and collaboration.

Marketing

Establishing, maintaining, and growing the visibility of BTI. Helps promote our programs, products, and services.

Development

Helps BTI achieve its mission by developing new resources and funding opportunities for the organization.

Outreach/Education

Plans and implements educational events that inform and engage communities on sustainability in the food system.

For more information visit our website www.thebrasstacks.org/volunteer or email Rachel@thebrasstacks.org

SMSC Organics Recycling Facility

Continued from page 1.



The current SMSC Organics Recycling site. Several windrows of organic material will be turned into compost. (Courtesy SMSC Organics Recycling Facility).

Over the years, the need for this facility has grown exponentially, which is why the SMSC is in the process of opening a new site: Dakota Prairie Composting, located off highways 169 and 41 near Chaska. It will almost triple the size of the original site and use new cutting-edge technology to compost materials two times faster than previous methods. The new site incorporates Aerated Static Pile (ASP) composting. A series of concrete bunkers pump air into (positive aeration) or draw air down through (negative aeration) the compost to provide oxygen and decompose materials much quicker. These bunkers are also temperature-controlled by highly advanced technology, and these changes make it faster and easier to compost materials and control odors.

The impact of composting extends beyond environmental benefits and contributes to the economic growth and stability of the tribe and local communities. For instance, Mystic Lake Casino Hotel implemented organics recycling and significantly improved waste diversion numbers and inventory costs. Additionally, many local golf courses and athletic fields also use the SMSC's compost to reduce soil erosion and improve water retention. This lowers costs and creates a resilient landscape.

If you seek to incorporate sustainable waste management practices into your business or everyday life, Skelly advises, "The best way to start composting is to tour a site or talk to your local composter. There's lots of misinformation about composting, and it's admittedly confusing." Don't be afraid to educate yourself and ask for help when beginning your sustainability journey!

For more information about the SMSC Organics Recycling Facility, visit their website www.smscorf.com, or email erin.skelly@shakopeedakota.org

For more information regarding the new Dakota Prairie Composting Site, visit their website projects page shakopeedakota.org/resources/projects/



A household organics drop-off site in New Prague. Organics from this site are collected and taken to the SMSC-ORF to be turned into compost.

Make a Contribution and help us continue to support a sustainable food stream!!

Your contribution of any size helps us provide free and low-cost programs to families, small businesses, and other organizations.

Scan the code or visit www.thebrasstacks.org to make a donation today!



About BTI

The Brass Tacks Initiative is a 501c3 nonprofit founded on a mission to support sustainability in the food stream through research, education, and collaboration.

Our name comes from the phrase "let's get down to brass tacks." The phrase means to address the most important facts of a project or problem. The fact is food waste is a problem with environmental, economic, and social impacts. We believe the only way to make an impact on food waste is to **research** best practices and new methods of recycling, **collaborate** with the companies who are generating waste to find alternatives to the landfill, and make sure that current and future leaders are equipped with the **education** needed to make sustainable impacts in their community.

For more information about BTI visit our website www.thebrasstacks.org or contact us via email at info@thebrasstacks.org.