



For Immediate Release
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Sonoma County Waste Management Agency and RENALE Settle Over the Certification of a New Compost Site Environmental Impact Report

Santa Rosa, CA - The Sonoma County Waste Management Agency (SCWMA) has settled its litigation with RENALE, a group of neighbors opposed to the selection of the Sonoma County Central Disposal Site for construction of a new compost facility. The final settlement is contingent on the SCWMA Board rescinding the certification of the Final Environmental Impact Report and associated documents selecting the Central Disposal Site. The SCWMA Board will consider the rescission of both the EIR and selection of the Central Disposal Site at its May 18 meeting. If both actions are rescinded, RENALE will dismiss its lawsuit.

After discussions with members of the waste disposal industry and careful consideration of this issue, SCWMA staff has come to the conclusion that development of the proposed project at the Central Disposal Site is no longer viable as a practical matter. Since the site selection process started in 2007, the composting industry has evolved and the variety of potential green and food waste solutions available has changed to a point where a single, large scale, publicly owned, privately operated compost facility like the one contemplated in the EIR is not necessarily the most efficient or cost effective means of providing composting services in Sonoma County. Further, since the project was initially envisioned, the State has adopted regulations, including additional requirements to protect air and water quality, that place new responsibilities and costs on composting operations which added to the cost and complexity of the project analyzed in the EIR. These factors, along with the limitations on SCWMA's authority (including a lack of authority to independently finance the facility, and the pending expiration of SCWMA's term) and continuing and steadfast neighborhood opposition to the Central Disposal Site create a combination of factors that SCWMA staff believes will limit private industry interest in constructing or operating a compost facility at that location. The SCWMA continues to believe that the EIR and the process followed to select the Central Disposal Site comply with the California Environmental Quality Act. However, without private industry participation, the SCWMA does not believe that the composting facility described in its EIR can be developed at the Central Disposal Site. In light of this belief, it is not an efficient use of resources to continue with the RENALE litigation, and the SCWMA therefore sought to settle the lawsuit.

The SCWMA has made arrangements with out-of-county facilities for processing of green waste while a new plan for a long term compost solution is developed. Since the compost site closure last fall, a number of private entities have reached out to the SCWMA staff to provide information regarding

potential solutions to provide compost services to the SCWMA and its members. In the event the SCWMA Board rescinds the EIR and selection of the Central Disposal Site, the SCWMA will continue to explore these and other potential solutions that will enable the SCWMA to provide compost services to its member agencies and the community in the most efficient, cost-effective and environmentally responsible manner possible.

Information about the SCWMA and its programs can be found at www.recyclenow.org. Written comments about the proposed actions to take place at the May 18 meeting, as well as comments about the future of composting in Sonoma County can be directed to Patrick Carter, SCWMA Executive Director, by email at patrick.carter@sonoma-county.org, or by mail at Sonoma County Waste Management Agency, 2300 County Center Drive, Suite B-100, Santa Rosa, CA 95403. There will be additional opportunities for public comment on this subject at future public meetings.