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CONTACT: Lisa Wolff, Communications Manager
207-523-3108 or wolff@ecomaine.org

Owner Communities

Bridgton
Cape Elizabeth
Casco
Cumberland
Falmouth
Freeport
Gorham
Gray
Harrison
Hollis
Limington
Lyman
North Yarmouth
Portland
Pownal
Scarborough
South Portland
Waterboro
Windham
Yarmouth

Associate Members

Baldwin
Hiram
Naples
Parsonsfield
Porter
Saco
Standish

Contract Members

Andover
Augusta
Brownfield
Carmel
Chebeague Island
Cornish
Eliot
Etna
Fryeburg
Glenburn
Greenland, NH
Jay
Kittery
Limerick
Livermore Falls
Manchester
Monmouth
Newburgh
Newington, NH
North Haven
Old Orchard Beach
Poland
Readfield
Sanford
Stetson
Stockton Springs
Swan's Island
Waterville
Wayne
Woolwich

ecomaine launches food waste recovery program

*Exeter Agri-Energy will produce energy and fertilizer
from the food waste ecomaine collects*

PORTLAND, Maine (September 7, 2016) – Maine's pioneer of single-sort recycling, ecomaine, is pleased to announce its new food waste recovery service is open for business!

The addition of food waste recovery to its portfolio of services will help its member communities reach the statewide recycling goal of 50 percent by 2021.

“At ecomaine, we are committed to delivering sustainable waste management solutions that conform to the Maine Department of Environmental Protection’s Solid Waste Management Hierarchy. We encourage residents and businesses to, reduce the amount of trash they make, reuse items whenever possible, recycle and separate food scraps from their trash wherever they can,” said Troy Moon, Board Chairman of ecomaine. “Recent studies have shown that organic materials make up about 40 percent of our waste stream. Half of that is food scraps. Providing towns and businesses with an easy way to divert this material from the waste stream will help our communities be more sustainable and may save them money.”

After conducting a rigorous Request for Proposal (RFP) process this spring, ecomaine awarded Exeter Agri-Energy and its affiliated collection company Agri-Cycle Energy, both of Exeter, Maine, a five-year contract. They will pick up the food scraps collected at ecomaine and transport them to their anaerobic digester for energy recovery or composting. ecomaine begins accepting food waste today.

ecomaine chose to work with a third-party food waste processor based on the results of its Organics Recycling Feasibility study in 2013. This report suggested that existing processing capacity in Maine makes it more cost effective to find a private sector partner than to construct a new facility.

Exeter Agri-Energy combines the power of anaerobic digestion with a state-of-the-art de-packager, which allows participants to collect food waste in the most “ick-free” fashion possible. “Simply place all food scraps in a clear plastic bag and the ‘ick’ factor is solved,” said ecomaine Chief Executive Officer Kevin Roche.

“We invested in a new system last November to position our companies and Maine for decades to come as leaders in responsible food waste disposal and renewable energy production,” said Adam Wintle, Managing Partner of Exeter Agri-Energy and Agri-Cycle Energy. “It’s helping us pre-process and shred solids, including grocery store food waste, before they are fed into the digesters to optimize biogas production.”

Exeter Agri-Energy’s anaerobic digestion system uses cow manure and organics to generate enough biogas to power approximately 800 homes. The zero-energy, closed-loop system also generates a liquid bi-product used as cropland fertilizer, and solids bi-products used as animal bedding or compost product. Agri-Cycle Energy is a full service food waste collection company providing solutions throughout the northeast.

About ecomaine:

ecomaine is the provider of solid waste and recycling services to 57 communities in Maine and New Hampshire. We are a non-profit, quasi-municipal organization, owned and operated by 20 municipalities in Maine. Learn more at ecomaine.org.

Troy Moon, Chairman. Kevin H. Roche, CEO/General Manager

64 Blueberry Road, Portland, Maine 04102. Tel: 207-773-1738. Fax: 207-773-8296. www.ecomaine.org

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ecomaine Food Waste Recovery – Frequently Asked Questions

1. How will food waste recovery work at ecomaine?



2. What kind of food waste will ecomaine accept?

Acceptable food waste products include:	Unacceptable* organic waste includes:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fruit, vegetable, meat & fish scraps • dairy products • bread, pasta, rice and grains • eggshells • coffee grounds and filters • soiled tea bags • jellies and sauces, and • fats, oils and greases. <p>Also, because our food waste processor Exeter Agri-Energy has a de-bagger, the food waste can be contained in a clear plastic bag – preferably in a bag that has already been used, such as a fruit and vegetable bag or clear storage bags.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • yard waste • facial tissues and paper towels • seafood shells • animal carcasses • cat litter, pet waste and personal hygiene products • medicines • metals, plastics or cardboards not containing food products. <p>*These items can instead be placed in the trash and combusted to produce electricity at ecomaine's waste-to-energy facility.</p>

3. So you are encouraging food waste to be contained in clear plastic bags? Won't that contaminate the food waste bi-products?

Yes, we are encouraging food waste to be captured in clear plastic bags and no, this will not contaminate the food waste bi-products due to the de-bagger technology available through Exeter Agri-Energy.

The ability to accept food waste in clear plastic bags is a key aspect of ecomaine's food waste recovery vision, for three reasons:

- By using clear plastic bags, we are clearly able to recognize the contents of the bags as food waste and ensure it does not contain unacceptable waste.
- It offers a second life for the clear plastic bags used to contain fruits and vegetables in the supermarket or at home in used clear food storage bags. The bags will then be returned to ecomaine's waste-to-energy facility after it is separated from its food waste to help produce electricity.
- At the commercial level, our ability to accept the food waste in bags will reduce fruit flies and better control the food waste odors.

4. Why can't yard waste be combined with food waste?

The reason yard waste cannot be combined with food waste is biological and economical. Economically, we encourage the separation of yard waste from food waste because yard waste is typically composted in a less expensive way than food waste. Biologically, a key component of anaerobic digestion in a closed-tank wet system like the one we have contracted to use is that it requires a moisture-rich composition and doesn't break down as it should in the presence of carbon-based amendments. Yard waste is more typically composted on its own. By contrast, food waste tends to contain more moisture and can be digested in a tank ... much like our own bodies digest it. Economically, the energy per unit volume of feedstock composed of food waste and manure is much higher than if yard waste were added in.

5. What is anaerobic digestion and how is it different than composting?

A key difference between anaerobic digestion and traditional backyard composting is that anaerobic digestion requires a moisture-rich composition as compared to traditional backyard composting. This is why yard waste, paper napkins and tissues are unacceptable.

Anaerobic digestion mixes cow manure with food waste to produce heat, electricity and other organic bi-products. The mixture is heated in an oxygen-free digester to just over 100 degrees Fahrenheit and is agitated intermittently over a 15-25 day retention period. Energy is recovered in the form of biogas, a potent combination of methane and carbon dioxide, which is burned in a 1,500 horsepower generator, producing enough heat to replace an average 700 gallons of heating oil daily (enough to heat 300 New England homes every year), and 22,000 kilowatt hours of electricity (enough to power as many as 800 households annually).

Because digestion is closed to the atmosphere, it eliminates greenhouse gases from the environment in volumes equivalent to removing 3,000 passenger vehicles from the road for a year. Learn more [here](#).

6. Who can use ecomaine's Food Waste Recovery Service?

Any ecomaine member community or private waste hauler can deliver food waste to ecomaine and pay \$55 per ton to drop it off at ecomaine's waste-to-energy facility. We expect initial customers will be businesses that generate large volumes of food waste, such as restaurants, universities, hospitals, and supermarkets.

Some municipalities may choose to implement pilot programs or town-wide systems that cover the cost, similar to the way collection costs are covered for recycling and waste collection.

7. Who will pay for collection and how will it work?

ecomaine has been studying the evolution and growing infrastructure surrounding food waste collection with great interest for the past few years. By offering a centralized food waste collection location in its Portland-based tipping hall floor complete with odor control systems in place, ecomaine believes it can make food waste collection even more efficient to its member communities while lessening the carbon footprint associated with collection and processing by companies located outside of our service area. This builds even more opportunity to grow food

waste recovery for our 57 member communities.

This is a voluntary program and ultimately the generators of food waste will be responsible for covering the costs associated with collection at this time. Currently, food waste can be collected for delivery to ecomaine from a variety of sources in a variety of ways, including:

- Private subscription models (such as Garbage to Garden and WeCompostIt!)
- Commercial and institutional collection (a network of haulers are already doing this today), and
- Town-wide curbside collection and/or municipal transfer station food waste collection.

8. So this program will run similar to the existing programs that take recyclables and trash?

In most cases, yes, however there may be some programs that operate differently. For example, private food waste pick-up service such as Garbage to Garden or WeCompostIt! are currently offering private subscription-based services to pick up food waste on a weekly basis, and that kind of service is sure to continue to be offered to homeowners regardless of where the food waste gets delivered. In this case, ecomaine just becomes another drop-off point for these businesses.

9. How will ecomaine communities benefit from participating in source-separated food waste recovery?

ecomaine member communities will benefit from keeping food waste out of our landfills. Much like our single-sort recycling program, communities stand to save money for their residents by lowering their annual tipping fees from their current level of approximately \$70 per ton for waste. In comparison, food waste recovered through ecomaine will only cost an average of \$55 per ton. However, the larger savings will come over time by simply keeping food waste out of landfills.

10. Will ecomaine market or promote the program?

ecomaine plans to promote participation in the program as it currently does with the single-sort recycling program, through School Recycling Grants (Deadline Oct. 31), the Annual Recycling Open House (Sept. 24), traditional and social media, and ongoing in-classroom programs and on-site tours.

11. How can I get my town involved in curbside food waste collection?

Consumers are encouraged to contact their elected officials to express interest in this program. In the meantime, some independent curbside services are available for a monthly subscription fee, such as Garbage to Garden and WeCompostIt!

12. Will food waste at ecomaine generate odors in the surrounding communities?

No. We have conducted tests of receiving food waste in our tipping hall at 64 Blueberry Road and the negative pressure in the building, which keeps the trash odor contained, also works well for containing food waste odors. We have also received approval by the Department of Environmental Protection to temporarily store up to 100 tons of food waste at a time in this way. Our contract includes pick-up of this food waste every 48 hours for transport to Exeter Agri-Energy.

13. How can I learn more about this program or ways to reduce food waste at home?

All members of the public are invited to attend ecomaine's Annual Recycling Open House on Saturday, Sept. 24 from 8 am to 11 am to tour our facilities and meet a variety of experts in food waste recovery. We will have a robust education area at this year's open house relating to various food waste recovery strategies, including anaerobic digestion, composting and vermi-composting, and will be raffling off worm compost bins and kitchen countertop food waste collection bins.

If you have questions about, please contact Communications Manager Lisa Wolff at 207-523-3108.