

Permits-By-Rule for Small-Scale, Source-Separated Food Scraps Collection, Composting, and Anaerobic Digestion Facilities

Solid Waste Advisory Committee
October 2026





Pennsylvania
Department of
Environmental Protection

Small-Scale Permit By Rule (PBR): Presentation Overview

- 1. Purpose of PBR**
- 2. What might this PBR include**
- 3. To whom does this PBR apply**
- 4. Benefits of this PBR**

Small-Scale PBR: Purpose

- Nearly 1.6 million tons of food waste was estimated to be disposed in the PA waste stream according to the 2022 PA Waste Characterization Study
- Currently there is no mechanism for source-separated food scraps (food waste) to be collected or processed under a PBR. Any entity that wants to collect or process this material must obtain at least a general permit to do so.
- The permitting process is a potential barrier for some that wish to operate a food waste collection, composting, or anaerobic digestion (AD) facility on a small scale



Pennsylvania
Department of
Environmental Protection

Small-Scale PBR: What might it include

- Parameters on what 'small scale' is defined as for each scenario (compost, AD, collection) (volume, container size, etc.)
- Reporting requirements, documentation, or records retention
- Materials acceptable to be collected or processed under these regulations
- Setbacks or locations of the facilities

Small-Scale PBR:

What might it include

- Transfer or processing requirements
- Pollution prevention and vector management
- Storage requirements
- Public use of the facility (posting hours, signage, etc.)
- Written notice – how to apply
- Finished product – beneficial use

Small-Scale PBR: What it will not include

- Residual waste
- Hazardous waste
- Food Processing Residuals (FPR)
- Operations that are on a large scale



Pennsylvania
Department of
Environmental Protection

Small-Scale PBR: Who can apply

- Anyone wishing to operate a source-separated food scraps (food waste) collection, composting, or AD facility on a small scale
- Businesses, municipalities, non-profit organizations, schools, colleges, universities, grocery stores, community organizations, the public, etc.



Pennsylvania
Department of
Environmental Protection

Small-Scale PBR: Who does this impact

- Pennsylvanians
- Local Governments
- Small Businesses
- Communities
- Existing composting/AD facilities
- Disposal facilities

Small-Scale PBR: Benefits and Additional Impact

- Economic
 - Local compost availability for residents and community
 - Access to local compost for numerous uses
 - Benefit small businesses
 - Potential cost savings of diverting food waste from disposal or use of energy generated from AD
 - Tipping fees for facilities
 - Local governments
 - Grant opportunities



Pennsylvania
Department of
Environmental Protection

Small-Scale PBR: Benefits and Additional Impact

- Social
 - Growth of locally-produced food using finished compost
 - Community gardens
 - Volunteerism, community relationship growth
 - Culturally-appropriate food growth
 - ‘Green’ job growth potential
 - Benefit soil health – tree plantings and green spaces in communities
 - Allows more access to food scraps diversion pathways for eco-minded people

Small-Scale PBR: Benefits and Additional Impact

- Environmental
 - Finished compost used as soil amendment, improve soil health and soil structure, water retention, nutrient uptake in plants, attract beneficial soil organisms
 - Potential for methane emission reduction from decomposition
 - Reduction of vehicles on the road long-hauling material to a processing facility – availability of more local options
 - Energy generation through AD – less reliance on traditional energy sources



Get In Touch

**Jessica Shilladay
RCSOB / Bureau of Waste Management
400 Market Street
Harrisburg, PA 17101**

...

717-787-0125 / jesshillad@pa.gov

The Department of Environmental Protection's mission is to protect Pennsylvania's air, land and water resources and to provide for the health and safety of its residents and visitors, consistent with the rights and duties established under the Environmental Rights Amendment (Article 1, Section 27 of the Pennsylvania Constitution).