



**pennsylvania**  
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL  
PROTECTION

**BUREAU OF WASTE MANAGEMENT**

**DIVISION OF MUNICIPAL and RESIDUAL WASTE**

**GENERAL PERMIT WMGM030**

**COMPOSTING YARD WASTE FACILITIES BETWEEN FIVE ACRES  
AND 15 ACRES**

**Issued: June 6, 2025**

**Expires: June 6, 2035**

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**A. Description:**

The approval herein granted is limited to the composting of yard waste and beneficial use of the compost so produced at compost sites. The waste streams accepted for composting shall be non-liquid waste (determined by EPA method 9095, paint filter liquid test, as described in the EPA Publication No. SW-846) and limited to the following categories of municipal waste: yard waste, leaf waste, grass clippings, garden residue, tree trimmings, chipped shrubbery and other vegetative material. The beneficial uses of the finished compost approved in this permit are for the marketing or distribution as soil substitute, soil conditioner, soil amendment, fertilizer, or mulch.

1. Yard waste composting facilities under 5 acres are exempt from this general permit if they are eligible for operation under the permit by rule permit provisions of 25 Pa. Code Section 271.103(a-c) & (h).
2. Approval to operate under this permit is limited to composting facilities which do not exceed fifteen (15) acres. The composting facility shall include all raw materials and waste storage areas, support structures to include buildings, access roads, stormwater devices, the composting and curing areas, and the finished compost storage area (other than areas storing bagged product for retail sales).

**B. Determination of Applicability Requirements:**

A person or municipality that proposes to compost yard waste and beneficially use the compost so produced at compost sites under the terms and conditions of this general permit after the date of permit issuance must obtain a "Determination of Applicability" ("DOA") from the appropriate Department Regional Office (see attached list) prior to commencing authorized activities under this general permit. A completed application on forms provided by the Department must be submitted electronically to the appropriate Department Regional Office. Additionally, the application fee should be submitted to the appropriate Department Regional Office. Checks shall be made payable to the "Commonwealth of Pennsylvania". No activities shall commence unless approved, in writing, by the Department.

**C. Operating Conditions:**

1. Areas at the permitted facility where incoming materials or waste and finished compost are stored, composted, or cured shall not be located:
  - a. In or below the 100-year floodplain of waters of this Commonwealth;
  - b. In or within 300 feet of an exceptional value wetland;
  - c. In or within 100 feet of a wetland other than an exceptional value wetland;

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- d. Within 100 feet of a sinkhole or area draining into a sinkhole;
  - e. Within 300 feet measured horizontally-from an occupied dwelling unless the owner has provided a written waiver consenting to the facility being closer than 300 feet;
  - f. Within 50 feet of a property line unless the owner has provided a written waiver consenting to the facility being closer than 50 feet;
  - g. Within 100 feet of a perennial stream;
  - h. Within 300 feet of a water source unless the owner has provided a written waiver consenting to the facility being closer than 300 feet; or
  - i. Within 3.3 feet of the regional groundwater table;
  - j. Within **900 feet** of the following, if existing prior to the date the Department received an administratively complete application, unless a written waiver is obtained from the current property owner of:
    - 1. A building owned by a school district or parochial school and used for instructional purposes.
    - 2. A park.
    - 3. A playground.
2. A person, municipality, or county operating a yard waste composting facility shall, for the duration of yard waste composting activities, identify the operation by posting and maintaining signs that are clearly visible at the junction of each access road and public road. The signs shall be easily seen and read. They should be constructed of a durable, weather-resistant material. The sign wording shall include the name, address, and telephone number of the person(s), municipality(ies), or count(ies) operating the facility, the operating hours, and the materials that can be received by the facility.
  3. Any waste generated from the composting process shall be managed in accordance with the Solid Waste Management Act of July 7, 1980, as amended, P.L. 380, No. 97, 35 P.S. §§ 6018,101 et seq. And the regulations promulgated hereunder.
  4. Each permitted facility operating under this general permit must have a certified compost operator on staff. This certification can be the Compost Specialization Certificate from the Professional Recyclers of Pennsylvania (PROP), or other Dep approved certification courses.
  5. The beneficial use of the waste as a soil amendment is contingent upon compliance with this permit and, if sold, the *Pennsylvania Fertilizer, Soil Conditioner and Plant Growth Substance Law* of the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture. (Information relating to this law may be obtained from the

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Department of Agriculture by writing the *Bureau of Plant Industry, Division of Agronomic Services, 230 North Cameron Street, Harrisburg, PA 17110-9408.*)

6. Upon cessation of permitted operations at the facility, the permittee shall assure removal of all wastes and provide for the processing, recycling, beneficial use, or disposal of wastes in accordance with the SWMA, the environmental protection acts and the regulations promulgated thereunder.
7. The activities authorized by this permit shall not cause or allow conditions that are harmful to the environment, public health or safety, including but not limited to, odors, litter, noise, or other public nuisances. The permittee shall not cause or allow the attraction, harborage, or breeding of vectors. Storage of the produced compost shall be covered to prevent dispersal by wind or water erosion and in a manner that prevents fire or explosion. The produced compost may not be stored in a manner that causes ground or surface water contamination.
8. The local police, fire department, or other appropriate state or local emergency response agencies shall be contacted immediately in the event of a fire, spill, or other hazard arising from the storage and curing of produced compost that threatens public health, safety, and welfare, or the environment, and whenever necessary in the event of personal injury related to such storage.
9. A copy of a Preparedness, Prevention and Contingency Plan (PPC), that is consistent with the Department's most recent guidelines, "Guidelines for the Development and Implementation of Environmental Emergency Response Plans" shall be maintained at each composting facility and updated at least every 3 years or sooner if information changes. The permittee shall immediately implement the applicable provisions of the Department approved PPC plan for any emergency that affects or threatens public health, safety, welfare, or the environment.
10. All activities conducted under the authorization granted in this permit shall be conducted in accordance with the permittee's application. Except to the extent the permit states otherwise, the permittee shall utilize materials as described in the permit application.
11. The permittee shall comply with the fugitive emissions regulations under 25 Pa. Code, Chapter 123 (relating to standards for contaminants) issued under the Air Pollution Control Act, the Act of January 8, 1960, P.L. 2119, 35 P.S. §4005, and shall comply with all the applicable provisions of 25 Pa. Code §§123.1 and 123.2 (relating to prohibition of certain fugitive emissions and fugitive particulate matter).
12. No person, municipality, or county shall cause or allow open burning at the facility.
13. Based on the facility composting volume capacity, the composting facility may be subject to the plan approval and operating requirements of 25 Pa. Code Chapter 127. If plan approval is required, the permittee may not construct,

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assemble, install, or modify the facility prior to obtaining a plan approval from the Department's Bureau of Air Quality.

14. Nothing in this permit shall be construed to supersede, amend, or authorize a violation of any of the provisions of any valid and applicable local law, ordinance, or regulation, providing that said local law, ordinance, or regulation is not preempted by the Solid Waste Management Act (SWMA), 35 P.S. §§ 6018.101—6018.1001; and the Municipal Waste Planning, Recycling and Waste Reduction Act of 1988, 53 P.S. §§4000.101, et seq.
15. As a condition of this general permit and of the permittee's authority to conduct the activities authorized by this general permit, the permittee hereby authorizes and consents to allow authorized employees or agents of the Department, without advance notice or search warrant, upon presentation of appropriate credentials and without delay, to have access to and inspect all areas on which solid waste management activities are being, will be, or have been conducted. This authorization and consent shall include consent to collect samples of waste, soils, water, or gases; take photographs; perform measurements, surveys, and other tests; inspect any monitoring equipment; inspect the methods of operation and inspect and/or copy documents, books, and papers required by the Department to be maintained. This permit condition is referenced in accordance with Sections 6018.608 and 6018.610(7) of the SWMA, 35 P.S. §§ 6018.608 and 6018.610(7). This condition in no way limits any other powers granted under the SWMA.
16. Any independent contractors or agents retained by the permittee in the completion of activities authorized under this general permit shall be subject to compliance history review by the Department prior to performance of any activities, as specified by the SWMA.
17. Failure of measures herein approved to perform as intended, or as designed, or in compliance with the applicable laws, rules, and regulations and terms and conditions of this permit, for any reason, shall be grounds for the revocation or suspension of the permittee's approval to operate under this permit.
18. The activities authorized by this general permit shall not harm or present a threat of harm to the health, safety, or welfare of the people or environment of this Commonwealth. The Department may modify, suspend, revoke, and reissue the authorization granted in this general permit if it deems necessary to prevent harm or the threat of harm to the public health, and the environment or if they cannot be adequately regulated under the conditions of this general permit.
19. The permittee shall comply with the terms and conditions of this general permit and with the environmental protection acts to the same extent as if the activities were covered by an individual permit. The Department may require an individual permit be obtained if the permittee cannot comply with the conditions of this general permit or is conducting an activity that harms or presents a threat of harm to the health, safety, or welfare of the public or the environment of this Commonwealth.

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20. This permit does not authorize and shall not be construed as an approval to discharge any waste, wastewater, or runoff from the site of processing to the land or waters of the Commonwealth.
21. Best Management Practices shall be implemented to divert storm water run-on from the storage area. Storm water runoff shall be managed in accordance with The Clean Streams Law and regulations promulgated thereunder. Prior to beginning operations at the facility, the operator must obtain all necessary storm water management permits.
22. Stormwater runoff at the facility should be diverted away from the processing area, tipping, staging, curing and storage areas of the compost material. Surface water controls shall be based on a 24-hour precipitation event to be expected every 25 years. Proper drainage controls such as diversions, dikes and drains must be constructed and maintained to prevent ponding and excessive wetting.
23. Runoff from the from the processing, tipping, staging, curing and storage areas of the compost material, finished mulch material, and finished compost storage areas shall not cause surface water pollution or groundwater degradation and shall be managed in accordance with The Clean Streams Law and regulations promulgated hereunder.
24. Storm water runoff shall be directed to a properly sized vegetated filter area for treatment.
25. Surface water management and erosion/sedimentation control shall be provided during all phases of construction and operation of the facility, to meet applicable requirements of 25 Pa. Code, Chapter 102 (relating to erosion control). In addition, a storm water management system shall be designed to meet federal and state storm water regulations and managed accordingly. Surface water controls shall be based on the most significant 24-hour precipitation event to occur based on a once in 25 years frequency. The application must contain an approved County Conservation Erosion and Sedimentation control plan.
26. The permittee shall maintain in force and affect a general liability insurance policy in accordance with 25 Pa. Code, Chapter 287, Subchapter E (relating to bonding and insurance requirements) to provide continuous coverage during operation of the facility and until the Department issues a final closure certification.
27. Equipment used for the processing and storage of incoming yard waste, curing materials, and finished compost shall be maintained in good operating condition. Daily inspections of each storage area and surrounding environs shall be conducted to determine compliance of the terms and conditions of this general permit and for evidence of failure.
28. Storage of incoming yard waste, curing materials, and finished compost by the permittee shall be in a manner that complies with the requirements set forth in 25 Pa. Code, Chapter 285 (relating to storage, collection, and transportation of municipal waste).

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29. The incoming yard waste, curing materials, and finished compost shall not be mixed with other types of solid wastes, including hazardous waste, municipal waste, special handling waste, or other residual waste, as the terms are defined in 25 Pa. Code § 287.1.
30. Analytical testing required by this general permit shall be performed by a laboratory accredited under the Pennsylvania Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Act, Act of 2002, 27 Pa. C.S.A. §§ 4101-4113.
31. Windrows (yard waste compost piles or windrows) shall be constructed and maintained as follows:
  - a. The compost area shall be constructed in a well-drained area with a workable surface and sloped to prevent ponding and to direct and control surface water. The windrows shall be placed to promote drainage away from the windrows.
  - b. The size of the compost piles or windrows should not exceed eight feet in height or sixteen feet in width unless the composting technology and or equipment can adequately manage the compost piles, and is approved by the Department.
  - c. Compost piles or windrows shall be constructed within one week following receipt of organic waste materials at the facility.
  - d. The facility shall provide adequate space to be maintained between the aerated piles, static piles or windrows to allow the unobstructive movement of emergency personnel and equipment unless other configurations are approved by the Department.
  - e. During the active composting process, the optimal moisture content of the windrows or compost piles shall range from 40 to 65 percent and the oxygen level during the composting process shall be maintained at a level greater than 5%.
  - f. The operators shall maintain records to demonstrate that all compost produced by the facility meets the time/temperature standards of 45C – 65C (113F – 140F) for at least 72 consecutive hours.
  - g. To promote decomposition, compost piles and windrows shall be turned and reconstructed at least once every three (3) months. A higher turning frequency may be required, depending on the composting technology unless the composting technology requires more intensive management.
32. The working surface (i.e. processing and storage areas) of the compost should be firm, uniformly graded, dry and as follows:
  - a. A compacted mixture of soil or soil like material of at least four feet thick, or select granular material with adequate of fine grained particles to bind it together and provide a stable working surface.

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- b. The pad shall be constructed to allow for operations to continue during all types seasonal weather conditions.
  - c. The pad shall be constructed to promote the direction of leachate into the leachate management system.
  - d. The pad shall be accessible at all times for inspection purposes to evaluate the condition of the pad and shall be made of a material that is repairable if damage is incurred during operations.
33. The operator shall not allow non-combustible residues or solid waste other than yard waste to accumulate at the facility and shall provide for proper disposal or processing. The operator shall submit a waste management plan addressing the disposal options selected. Yard waste and other municipal waste received at the facility that are not suitable for composting shall be removed weekly and disposed or processed at a permitted municipal waste facility.
34. Plastic bags, food waste, food processing sludge, spent mushroom substrate, manure, dewatered dredge waste, non-compostable residues, waste materials not identified in Condition 1 above, etc., are not authorized under this general permit.
35. Rejected and other wastes, that are not authorized under this general permit, shall be separated from the incoming waste materials intended for beneficial use in the production of compost material.
36. The operator shall establish a plan for monitoring at an adequate frequency for inspecting the facility to detect hot spots in any composting, curing or storage areas, dust or litter accumulation, surface water accumulation, erosion or sedimentation, vectors, odors, and other problems. The operator shall take prompt, necessary corrective actions to preclude combustion.
37. The Department may prohibit the use of grass clippings at a yard waste composting facility if the grass clippings cause or contribute to nuisances, or if the site is adversely affecting, or has potential to adversely affect, the citizens or environment of the commonwealth. Grass clippings shall not be brought to or received at a yard waste composting facility unless:
- a. Grass clippings delivered to the yard waste composting facility in non-compostable bulk, bags or other collection containers are emptied of all grass clippings.
  - b. Grass clippings are incorporated into the windrows of partially composted leaves or other yard waste within twenty-four (24) hours of delivery to the facility.
  - c. Grass clippings are incorporated into the partially composted windrows of partially composted leaves or other yard waste at a ration not to exceed

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one part grass to 3 parts leaves or active compost or other carbon source.

- d. Plastic bags are not approved to be accepted for processing, only decomposable or Kraft style paper bags are approved to be accepted for processing.
38. The access road to the facility shall be paved or surfaced with asphalt, gravel, and cinder or equivalent material and be capable of withstanding the load limits. The access road shall be maintained to control dust and to prevent or control the tracking of mud onsite or offsite.
39. Each yard waste composting facility shall be operated in a manner, which results in the active biological decomposition of the yard waste material received.
40. The finished compost generated under the terms and conditions of this general permit shall cease to be waste when the compost:
- a. Is used, sold, or distributed as soil substitute, soil conditioner, soil amendment, fertilizer, or mulch for landscaping applications or composting; this provision applies to the finished mulch material or finished compost that is sold, traded, distributed, given away or used for landscaping applications or composting locations other than the processing facility where the material is produced
  - b. Does not present a greater harm or threat of harm than the use of products which the compost is replacing; and
  - c. Is not abandoned or disposed.

**D. Recordkeeping:**

- 1. The permittee shall maintain records of all analytical evaluations conducted in accordance with this permit, and records shall be made available to the Department upon request. Required records shall be retained for a minimum of 5 years. Records of analytical evaluations must include, at a minimum, the following for each sample: the dates of sampling and testing, sampling procedures utilized, name of the individual who collected the sample, the volume or weight of the sample, each parameter tested, the analytical results, the name of the analytical laboratory used, and the analytical methodologies employed.
- 2. The permittee shall maintain records of all waste accepted by the facility, and records shall be made available to the Department upon request. Required records shall be retained for a minimum of 5 years. Records of each source of incoming waste must include, at a minimum, the following: the name, address, and phone number of each source of incoming waste; the date of receipt; the quantity of waste received; the results of visual observations; and the name, address, and phone number of the destination of each outgoing

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shipment of waste. The permittee shall also maintain records of spills or releases that include, at a minimum, the following: the location, date, time, identification, and quantity of spilled or released material, and a description of how the material was cleaned up. The permittee shall also maintain records of all reports submitted to the Department or to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

3. The operator shall maintain records to demonstrate that all compost produced by the facility has achieved the thermophilic stage. Records of the weights or volumes and types of incoming yard waste; finished compost shall be maintained on the premises or at another location with the approval of the Department for at least 5 years. These records shall be made available for inspection by the Department staff upon request. The records shall contain: the date of receipt and quantity of incoming materials processed at the site. In addition, the following must also be recorded: composting temperatures, and turning frequencies.
4. The permittee shall maintain records of rejected, unacceptable and unauthorized wastes that are disposed by the permittee. The records shall include the name and address of the disposal location, date of disposal, type of waste volume or weight of the waste that is disposed.
5. The permittee shall maintain records of volume or weight of the finished compost materials that are generated, sold, given away and stored on site.

**E. Reporting Requirements:**

1. Any person that operates under the provisions of this permit shall immediately notify the Department via certified mail of any changes in: the company name, address, owners, operators, and/or responsible officials of the company, compliance status, and the status of any permit issued by the Department or federal government under the environmental protection acts.
2. Persons operating under the provision of this general permit shall submit to the appropriate Department Regional Office (see attached list), an annual report on the beneficial use activities conducted under this permit by March 1 for the preceding calendar year. This report shall include a summary of volumes of yard waste received at the facility and of compost generated and distributed annually, and the information required by Conditions D.1. through D.5.
3. The permittee shall immediately notify the Department's Emergency Hotline by telephone at 800-541-2050 and the waste management program in the appropriate DEP regional office (see attached list) of any accidental spills and shall take appropriate immediate action to protect the health and safety of the public and the environment.

**F. Renewal:**

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A permittee that plans to continue the operations authorized under this general permit, after the expiration date indicated on the approval for coverage page, shall file a complete application for permit renewal at least 180 days before the expiration date of this general permit unless permission has been granted by the Department for submission at a later date. The renewal applications shall be submitted to the appropriate DEP Regional Office (see attached list) and include, at a minimum, the following:

1. General Information Form (Authorization Application for a Residual or Municipal Waste General Permit Application),
2. Form B (Professional Certification),
3. Form 20 (Application for a Municipal or Residual Waste General Permit),
4. Form 27M (Acceptance of General Permit Conditions), and
5. Updated bonding worksheets, if applicable.

Additionally, a renewal application fee in the amount identified in Section A (General Information) of the Form 20 must be sent to the appropriate DEP Regional Office. A check shall be made payable to the "Commonwealth of Pennsylvania."

In the event that a timely and complete application for renewal has been submitted and the Department is unable, through no fault of the permittee, to reissue the general permit or approval for coverage before its current coverage expiration date, the terms and conditions of the approved coverage will automatically continue and will remain fully effective and enforceable pending the issuance or denial of the renewal for permit coverage, provided the permittee is, and has been, operating in compliance with the terms and conditions of the general permit.

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**DEFINITIONS**

**“Composting”**

The process by which organic solid waste is biologically decomposed under a controlled anaerobic or aerobic to yield a humus-like product.

**“Composting Facility”**

A facility for processing solid waste by composting.

**“Composting Pad”**

An area within a composting facility where compost or solid waste is processed, stored, loaded or unloaded.

**“General Permit”**

Except as provided in Subchapter J (relating to beneficial use of sewage sludge by land application), a regional or Statewide permit issued by the Department for a specified category of beneficial use or processing of solid waste, the terms and conditions of which allow an original applicant, a registrant and a person or municipality that obtains a determination of applicability, to operate under the permit if the terms and conditions of the permit and certain requirements of this article are met.

**“Landowner”**

The person or municipality in whom legal title to the surface of the land is vested.

**“Leaf Waste”**

Leaves, garden residues, shrubbery and tree trimmings, and similar material, but not including grass clippings.

**“Non-Liquid Waste”**

Wastes that do not pass the paint filter liquid test (EPA Method 9095) as described in the EPA Publication No. SW-846.

**“Permit Area”**

The area of land and water within the boundaries of the permit, which is designated on the permit application maps as approved by the Department. The term includes areas which are or will be used or affected by the residual waste processing or disposal facility.

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**“Source Separated Recyclable Materials”**

Materials that are separated from municipal waste at the point of origin for the purpose of recycling. The term is limited to clear glass, colored glass, aluminum, steel and bimetallic cans, high-grade office paper, newsprint, corrugated paper (cardboard), plastics and other marketable grades of paper.

**“Source Separated Food Scraps”**

Pre-consumer food wastes that are separated from municipal waste at the point of origin for the purpose of recycling and composting.

**“Storage”**

The containment of waste on a temporary basis in a manner that does not constitute disposal of the waste. It shall be presumed that containment of waste in excess of 1 year constitutes disposal. This presumption can be overcome by clear and convincing evidence to the contrary.

**“Yard Waste”**

Leaves, grass clippings, garden residue, tree trimmings, chipped shrubbery and other vegetative material.

**Department of Environmental Protection  
Regional Offices  
(and Counties Served)**

- I. Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery, Philadelphia.

**Southeast Regional Office**  
2 East Main Street  
Norristown, PA 19401  
Phone: (484) 250 - 5960

- II. Carbon, Lackawanna, Lehigh, Luzerne, Monroe, Northampton, Pike, Schuylkill, Susquehanna, Wayne, Wyoming.

**Northeast Regional Office**  
2 Public Square  
Wilkes-Barre, PA 18711-0790  
Phone: (570) 826 – 2516

- III. Adams, Bedford, Berks, Blair, Cumberland, Dauphin, Franklin, Fulton, Huntingdon, Juniata, Lancaster, Lebanon, Mifflin, Perry, York.

**Southcentral Regional Office**  
909 Elmerton Avenue  
Harrisburg, PA 17110-8200  
Phone: (717) 705 – 4706

- IV. Bradford, Cameron, Centre, Clearfield, Clinton, Columbia, Lycoming, Montour, Northumberland, Potter, Snyder, Sullivan, Tioga, Union.

**Northcentral Regional Office**  
208 West 3<sup>rd</sup> Street - Suite 101  
Williamsport, PA 17701  
Phone: (570) 327 – 3653

- V. Allegheny, Beaver, Cambria, Fayette, Greene, Somerset, Washington, Westmoreland.

**Southwest Regional Office**  
400 Waterfront Drive  
Pittsburgh, PA 15222-4745  
Phone: (412) 442 – 4000

- VI. Armstrong, Butler, Clarion, Crawford, Elk, Erie, Forest, Indiana, Jefferson, Lawrence, McKean, Mercer, Venango, Warren.

**Northwest Regional Office**  
230 Chestnut Street  
Meadville, PA 16335-3481  
Phone: 814-332-6848