

**Marketing Compost Manure to Public Entities
Texas Cooperative Extension
FY 01 319(h) Nonpoint Source Grant
TCEQ Contract No. 582-2-44407**

Quarter no. 3 From 12/16/02 Through 03/15/03.

I. Introduction/Abstract

Project efforts during the third quarter focused upon administrative tasks to complete required TCEQ documents for establishment of project activities within the project region while continuing to publicize the project and its efforts to both participants (compost facilities, TCE and TAES specialists, SWCDs, etc) and to recipients (public entities, private growers, etc.). The subcontract process for the Compost Marketing Firm (CMF) was a big success in that R. Alexander, Associates (RAA) has been a positive contribution to the education and marketing efforts. Coordination activities with other entities such as the TCEQ/TxDot project and the TSSWCB effort also developed with the prospect of trade show activities, website sharing and utilizing the SWCDs as a link with the Incentive Program. Other major deliverables that were met include the submission of the Research/Demonstration Design Plan (RDDP) and the corresponding Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) and a report of the results from the public entity survey of compost production and use. Furthermore, additional literature and tools were added to the project website. In looking forward to the next quarter, TCE and RAA will finalize the Compost Education and Marketing Plan (CEMP). The second QAPP, Compost Quality Assessment, will also be finalized and submitted. Following the approval of the Applied Research QAPP, TCE will begin to implement proposed research studies/demonstration plots throughout the project region. Furthermore, more extensive outreach activities and training programs will begin to be developed throughout this next quarter.

II. Overall Progress and Results by Specific Work Task

Task 1.1 Texas Water Resources Institute (TWRI) will serve as the prime contractor for the project and provide overall administration required fulfilling the "Technical Contractor" responsibilities under the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) Composted Manure Incentive Project scope of work. Responsibilities include planning and facilitating meetings; negotiating subcontracts; submitting reimbursement documents and appropriate documentation of project progress; handling budget and fiscal reviews; adherence to Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board (TSSWCB) and TCEQ nonpoint source management program; and ensure all activities, deliverables and tasks follow TCEQ contract provisions.

The following actions have been completed during this reporting period:

- a. The subcontract process with RAA was officially completed by TWRI and education and marketing efforts are moving forward accordingly. RAA has

already been working with project participants and composters to fulfill contractual duties.

- b. TWRI participated in meetings with representatives from Central Texas Cattleman's Association, Ft. Hood Military Base, Rangeland Ecology and Management Department and the Blackland Research and Extension Center at Temple to discuss potential markets for dairy compost in the Leon River basin and at Ft. Hood. Subsequently, separate projects have commenced in both areas under different funding sources and dairy compost from the watershed will be potentially used in these projects.
- c. TWRI, TCEQ and EPA conducted site visits to each dairy compost facility within the watershed. With these visits, TCE was able to learn more about each facility and also educate the composters on their project and goals.
- d. TCE, TCEQ and RAA also visited each compost facility within the watershed. In this visit, production practices and compost quality were evaluated.
- e. TWRI and TCE conducted a planning meeting with the Cross Timbers SWCD, the Upper Leon SWCD and TSSWCB to discuss implementation of a process for private producers to take advantage of the TCEQ Composted Manure Incentive Program by receiving a reduced price for compost purchases through the local SWCD. Composters and application services are currently being contacted to further develop this process and to ensure its success.
- f. The project specialist position in Stephenville was dissolved due to lack of interest. Salary funds for the position were used to support an additional graduate student and student worker.
- g. An informative project brochure was developed by TWRI. Following revisions and review by TCEQ, RAA, TSSWCB, TIAER and TxDot, the brochure was submitted for publication. Printed copies will be shared with all project participants to further promote TCEQs dairy compost efforts within the watershed.

Task 2.1 Assess the potential market, the compost product quality, existing educational and promotional materials available for a composted manure marketing project, and research and demonstration needs.

The following actions have been completed during this reporting period:

- a. Additional survey data was taken because review of initial data proved to be inadequate.
- b. Results were tabulated and summarized in the "Dairy Compost Use and Production Survey Results" Report. The report was submitted to TCEQ and TCE is waiting for approval.
- c. Urban and rural dairy compost use by private citizens will be assessed in the next quarter through an informal survey conducted by the County Extension Agents within the watershed.

Task 2.2 Develop a strategic Compost Education and Marketing Plan (CEMP). The CEMP will include a Research/Demonstration Design Plan (RDDP) to address the

research and demonstration needs and a Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) to address environmental data collection.

The following actions have been completed during this reporting period:

- a. A discussion meeting was held between TCE, TWRI and TCEQ to finalize the required documents for the research and assessment activities. In this meeting, TCEQ defined the following documents, which will be required from TCE: an RDDP, an Applied Research QAPP, a CEMP, a Compost Quality Assessment QAPP and a Compost Use Assessment Plan.
- b. TCE revised and resubmitted the RDDP to TCEQ. TCE is waiting on approval from TCEQ. Following approval, TCE will implement proposed applied research studies and demonstrations within the watershed.
- c. The corresponding Applied Research QAPP was also submitted to TCEQ. TCE met with TCEQ regarding the content of the QAPP and revisions were made accordingly and resubmitted. TCE is waiting for approval from TCEQ and EPA.
- d. An outline of the CEMP was submitted to TCEQ and discussed. The CEMP is in progress and will be submitted to TCEQ within the next quarter.
- e. The corresponding QAPP, the Compost Quality Assessment QAPP, is also in progress. Currently, TCE is searching for an approved STA certified laboratory that can produce quality compost results in the most economic fashion. The Compost Quality Assessment QAPP will be submitted within the next quarter.
- f. The Compost Use Assessment Plan will outline the steps TCE will take to ensure that applications and use techniques by public entities are made in an environmentally sound fashion. Furthermore, with this plan, TCE will assess the satisfaction of selected public entities, which use dairy compost. Plant and land management results will also be assessed at selected application sites under this plan.

Task 2.3 Implement the strategic CEMP. The CEMP will provide educational outreach, technical assistance, and documented materials for compost producers and users. It will also provide for the direct marketing of composted manure. The CEMP will target both public entities and private citizens throughout the region.

The following actions have been completed during this reporting period:

- a. RAA, TCEQ and TCE conducted site visits to each dairy compost production facility throughout the watershed to assess production practices and compost quality. Composters used this opportunity to ask questions and obtain information regarding their site and production practices. Subsequently, RAA has received requests from individual composters for additional information.
- b. RAA and TCE are working with Scott McCoy of TCEQ. Scott currently has reservations for booth spaces or speaking events at several trade shows throughout the state. If possible, RAA will supplement Scott's travel and at the same time both projects will benefit by promoting the efforts in a joint fashion.

- c. Tentative dates (September 23-24) were set for County Extension Agent Training within the watershed. All four district extension directors were notified and have expressed interest in participating.
- d. A publication regarding a rating system for dairy compost and possibly other organic materials is in progress. TCE is further developing the publication before it is sent out for revisions from project participants.

Task 2.4 Develop a project web site comprised of technical information for project cooperators, demonstration locations and research data, sources of available compost, educational literature from TCE, and facts about TCEQ rebate program and the TCEQ and TSSWCB nonpoint source management program.

The following actions have been completed during this reporting period:

- a. Research for compost users was added to the website.
- b. A list of compost production facilities and their contact information was added directly to the project website. A link to the TCEQ website regarding the approval status of each compost facility was also added to the project website.
- c. Links are being revised to more appropriately reflect the information on TCEQs website regarding their additional efforts in producing and marketing dairy compost.
- d. TxDot, TCEQ, RAA, and TCE are currently gathering photo documentation of composting efforts throughout the watershed. This collection of photos will be added as a photo gallery on the project website. A short description of the photos contents and the responsible agency will be included with each photo. The photo gallery will be a continued work in progress yet should become accessible within the next quarter.

Task 3.1 Provide TCEQ with assistance for quality assurance activities. Compost production sites will be evaluated to ensure sound production practices and at least 20 random site visits will be conducted to monitor uses of compost to ensure applications, BMPs and rates are made in an environmentally appropriate manner.

The following actions have been completed during this reporting period:

- a. RAA, TCEQ and TCE visiting compost production facilities to evaluate the production practices and quality of the compost.
- b. No compost use sights have been evaluated to date.

Task 3.2 Where existing guidance literature is lacking, reports of current and past field trials and result demonstration activities will be documented and published. All effective compost production and use aspects will be documented in draft case studies, cost analysis and effectiveness assessment reports.

The following actions have been completed during this reporting period:

- a. No progress to report at this time.

Task 3.3 Develop and submit annual and final joint reports of 'success stories' including assessment and feasibility of program strategies so that similar programs could develop from the provided outline.

The following actions have been completed during this reporting period:

- a. No progress to report at this time.

III. Related Issues/Current Problems and Favorable or Unusual Developments

Requirements of various project related documents has inhibited development of some project activities. Requirements were clarified at discussion meeting between TCE and TCEQ and are either already fulfilled or will be fulfilled shortly. Completion and approval of these documents will allow more productive activities to occur and project goals will be met.

IV. Conclusion/Projected Work for Next Quarter

The following will be accomplished during the coming quarter:

- a. The RDDP and the Applied Research QAPP will be approved by TCEQ and applied research studies and demonstration plots will be implement accordingly.
- b. The CEMP will be submitted to TCEQ.
- c. The corresponding QAPP, the Compost Quality Assessment QAPP, will be submitted to TCEQ and following approval, compost quality will be evaluated at each production facility.
- d. An outline of needed fact sheets and/or publications will be developed by TCE and RAA. The initial fact sheets will be developed and submitted for review by TCEQ.
- e. The photo gallery and more project materials/documents will be added to the project Website during the next quarter.
- f. The process between the Cross Timbers and the Upper Leon SWCD and the compost facilities will be further developed and possibly finalized to allow for complete utilization of incentive program in the fall.