



MEDIA RELEASE

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CITY OF GRAND JUNCTION, MESA COUNTY AND CSU EXTENSION PARTNER ON COMPOST UTILIZATION STUDY

GRAND JUNCTION, Colo. July 27, 2023 – The City of Grand Junction, Mesa County, and Colorado State University have partnered to execute a compost utilization study to further understand how the addition of compost may improve the holding capacity of water in the soil and increase soil fertility as well as biological activity. The project is being conducted through on-farm trials to demonstrate the benefits of compost and develop compost application rate recommendations for different crops grown in the Grand Junction area. The study is part of a USDA grant for \$86,000 received by the City of Grand Junction to increase organic waste diversion and promote the use of compost in food production systems.

“This study will provide valuable data about the benefits of using compost to conserve water in our communities while repurposing valuable, natural resources. We have successfully captured more than 124 tons of organic material since our new programs have been introduced to the community,” said Jay Valentine, General Services director. “Not only does this conserve valuable space in the landfill but provides useful compost material.”

According to a 2019 National Oceanic and Atmospheric Agency report, the upper Colorado River streamflow has declined by 20 percent in the last century causing historic drought conditions in the basin. As a result, agricultural producers on Colorado’s western slope have been exploring innovative ways to conserve water, such as the application of compost. According to the Natural Resource Defense Council, for every 1 percent increase of organic matter, soil can hold an additional 20,000 gallons of water per acre.

This spring, the City of Grand Junction began a yard waste collection program for new Dual Stream recycling customers as the program is being phased in throughout the city. That green waste goes to the Mesa County Landfill’s compost facility for distribution to local area farms. The compost utilization trial portion of the study is taking place at three area farms; two locations managed by Early Morning Orchard in Palisade and a third at the Fruita Flower Farm. Crops treated with the compost include peach trees, vegetable row crops, and cut flowers. Jeff Pieper, the Colorado State University commercial horticulturist who is serving as the science liaison for the project states that, “local governments’ dedication to producing compost in the Grand Junction area offer a unique opportunity for local businesses to utilize organic materials that would have otherwise ended up in the landfill, and improve soil health and water use efficiency.” Baseline data was collected in the spring of this year and compost was applied prior to the 2023 growing season. Data will be collected for two consecutive years quantifying metrics such as soil health, water infiltration, compaction, fungal to bacterial ratios, and more.

To learn more about the compost utilization study and Grand Junction's green waste program, contact Recycling/Waste Reduction Supervisor Kym Beck at recycling@gjcity.org or 970-256-4136.

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