
NOTICE OF EXEMPTION
FROM ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Project Title: San Mateo Resource Conservation District's Compost Program

Project Location: Various farms and ranches in San Mateo County

Description of Nature and Purpose of Project:

This project aims to improve cropland and pasture soil health on working lands in San Mateo County. Through this program, the San Mateo Resource Conservation District (SMRCD) will implement compost projects on agricultural operations in San Mateo County by working with both cities within the county and county of San Mateo to meet their respective SB1383 compost procurement requirements.

Compost use is a common agricultural practice primarily because it is an effective way to increase soil organic matter, which is an important component of soil health as it provides and retains nutrients, improves soil aggregation, reduces soil erosion, and increases water holding capacity. Compost use on croplands and rangelands is a practice that is supported by the United States Department of Agriculture and California Department of Agriculture.

Potential sites will receive technical assistance from San Mateo Resource Conservation District staff, who will develop a project implementation plan. The type, amount, and timing of compost application will be based on existing site (including soil and plant) conditions, desired crop yield, growing season, and carbon sequestration goals. Compost application rates will be consistent with established agronomic practices and applicable water quality regulations.

Name of Person, Board, Commission or Department Proposing to Carry Out Project:

San Mateo Resource Conservation District
Kellyx Nelson, Executive Director
80 Stone Pine Road, Suite 100
Half Moon Bay, CA 94019

EXEMPT STATUS:

- X Categorical Exemption, Class 1 (15304)
- X Categorical Exemption, Class 4 (15304)

Contact Person: Adria Arko Telephone 650-712-7765 ext 105

August 8, 2022

Date of Determination: I do hereby certify that the above determination has been made pursuant to State and Local requirements.



Adria Arko, Senior Program Manager-Climate and Agriculture
San Mateo Resource Conservation District

REMARKS:

Compost is used to reduce soil erosion and maintain or improve soil conditions for the sustainability of the resource; increase the rate of soil organic matter accumulation; sequester carbon in the soil; manage nutrients and improve nutrient cycling; and promote increased productivity and economic stability through farm and ranch land sustainability.

This program applies to agricultural land uses where compost applications will improve soil conditions. Selected projects will only use compost from a CalRecycle certified compost facility, and the timing of compost application shall correspond as closely as possible with plant nutrient uptake characteristics, while considering cropping system limitations, weather and climatic conditions, and land application area accessibility.

Compost will not be applied"

- To sites where slopes pose safety concerns for equipment operators.
- To ecologically sensitive areas, such as: wetlands, karst sinkholes, vernal pools, hydric soils, or naturally low fertility sites (e.g. serpentine soils, sage steppe, alkali sink or chaparral).
- Where the area will not be vegetated for longer than 3 months following application, or where nutrients from the amendment will be subject to leaching or runoff loss and/or present water quality concerns.
- During high wind events, to minimize compost dust and fugitive PM emissions.

Steps taken to minimize impact include:

- Compost will be analyzed by an appropriately credentialed laboratory prior to application, as required by CalRecycle to ensure that no hazardous chemicals are inadvertently introduced to the soil at receiving sites.
- Compost application will ideally be completed the same day as delivery to minimize stockpiling of compost. Compost will not be stockpiled more than 3 days between delivery and application. Measures will be taken to reduce nutrient runoff from any temporarily stockpiled compost. In addition, the RCD will monitor the weather and work with agricultural partners to deliver and apply the compost at the most opportune time to minimize air and water impacts from temporarily stockpiled compost.
- The compost will be spread by a professional following routine agricultural best management practices with compost spreaders applying even amounts across the target area to add the compost to the existing agricultural landscape and avoid creating topographic or drainage anomalies.

- The compost application at each receiver site is expected to take one day.
- Disturbance shall not exceed the minimum area necessary to complete the project and shall be limited to the application area and equipment access points.

The project meets the CEQA criteria for a categorical exemption from environmental review under Class 1 (15401) and Class 4 (15304).

Section 15301 of the California Code of Regulations defines a Class 1 categorical exemption as “the operation, repair, maintenance, permitting, leasing, licensing, or minor alteration of existing public or private structures, facilities, mechanical equipment, or topographical features, involving negligible or no expansion of use beyond that existing at the time of the lead agency's determination.” In the case of this program, there will be no expansion of use, as it applies to existing agricultural operations.

Class 4 consists of minor public or private alterations in the condition of land, water, and/or vegetation which do not involve removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees except for forestry or agricultural purposes. This program consists of minor alterations to the land at the agricultural operations and will be limited to improved soil condition of agricultural operations. These practices do not result in physical changes to the environment, damage to scenic resources, historic resources or create significant environmental or cumulative impacts, due to being implemented on existing farms.