

Full name of your Program Work Team (PWT)

Recycling Agricultural Plastics Program (RAPP) 2015 Annual Report

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PWT's greatest accomplishments

The focus of the RAPP PWT is to continue to expand infrastructure for recycling of agricultural plastics within NY. Several markets exist but there is very little local collection. Most of the collection that has occurred has been directly through RAPP or a local county program. These efforts are not sustainable over time. A number of counties have had success with integrating RAPP with their existing solid waste recycling operations. We intend to creatively build on this, even with the low price of recyclables.

Three PWT meetings were held in Malone, Hamden and Kingston. Each meeting had a regional focus but with statewide participation particularly at the Hamden meeting. The greatest accomplishment was in Malone with a recycling company, TAP Industries, agreeing to a plan for them to pick up and move the agricultural plastics that had been baled in Franklin, Clinton and Essex Counties to their facilities as starting inventory for their planned processing line. As a direct result, 156,000 lbs of plastic was moved to their recycling facilities from these counties. They also picked up an additional 35,000 lbs of plastic from Saratoga County.

The PWT meeting in Malone (March 20, 2015) was focused on the challenges experienced with bringing baled plastic in from a large geographic area for shipment to market. Limited collection and baling had occurred through RAPP in Franklin County and Clinton County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) was able to purchase a plastics baler through the Lake Champlain Basin Program to bale plastics within the basin. Large quantities of plastic were baled but remained on farm.

Nine staff from Cornell, Franklin County CCE and SWCD, Clinton County SWCD, TAP Industries and a local consultant met to creatively discuss how to move ahead. TAP Industries wants the feedstock for their plastics recycling line they are assembling and has the equipment to pick up from farms and move the bales to their facilities. Result: approximately 191,000 lbs of baled agricultural plastics were moved to TAP by early September.

The PWT meeting in Hamden, hosted by Delaware County CCE and co-chair Janet Aldrich, focused on building a larger support group for recycling agricultural plastics with stakeholders, including gaining the interest of a new region and counties. The focus was on Southeastern, NY (larger lower Hudson Valley). The meeting was held in Delaware County to feature their success with recycling agricultural plastics through their Walton Solid Waste Management Center. The meeting included an afternoon tour of their facilities.

Thirty-five people from across NY participated in this meeting representing Cornell, CCE, solid waste managers, recycling coordinators, private waste management companies, DEC, SWCDs, an environmental group, Farm Bureau, an agricultural grant organization and farmers. The primary result was to expand interest in recycling ag plastics in Southeastern NY with these stakeholders. It also encouraged Ontario County to move ahead.

With the favorable feedback from the Hamden meeting, a regional PWT meeting was scheduled and held in Kingston on August 18, 2015. Eighteen people attended representing Dutchess, Ulster, Orange, Rockland and Sullivan Counties. Cornell, CCE, DEC, EPA, Solid Waste and a number of farms were represented. Steps are being planned for 2016 progress. There is high interest in recycling agricultural plastics in the region but limited infrastructure to collect the plastic and it represents a small percentage of the waste stream. Considerable creativity was evident in the group, particularly the farmers that offered to contribute to logistics of collection. Combining boat wrap with ag plastics was one consideration for increasing volume and working with a private recycler.