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## **CONTACT**

Jim Iavarone  
Mill Valley Refuse Service  
(415) 457-9760  
[jiavarone@millvalleyrefuse.com](mailto:jiavarone@millvalleyrefuse.com)  
<http://www.millvalleyrefuse.com>

### **Mill Valley Refuse Proposes New Residential Food Waste Collection Service**

April 21, 2010 – In an effort to meet Marin County’s diversion and zero waste goals, Mill Valley Refuse Service has included in the company’s annual rate application a proposal to add residential food waste composting services to all of its service areas, which include Mill Valley, Corte Madera, Tiburon, Belvedere and the unincorporated areas surrounding those cities.

If approved, the food waste composting service would allow residents to mix all food waste and food-soiled paper together with yard waste into the green cans that residents currently use for yard waste only. The company would then pick up these cans on a weekly, rather than the current bi-weekly, schedule.

The Marin Hazardous and Solid Waste Management Joint Powers Authority (JPA) has established a goal of 80% waste reduction in the next five years and “zero” disposal by 2025. The JPA recently concluded a zero waste feasibility study that identified food waste as comprising 23% of all waste disposed in Marin, and targeted food waste composting as an important way to reach diversion goals. The report estimates that households generate between 8 and 10 pounds of food waste per week.

Preserving landfill space by diverting food waste away from the landfill is just one benefit of a composting program. Food waste mixed with yard waste produces rich compost that can be put back into the earth, closing the recycling loop.

“We believe food waste composting is a service our customers want,” said Mill Valley Refuse Service spokesperson James Iavarone. “Articles about food waste collection in San Francisco and the East Bay have been appearing in the past few months, so now we’re getting calls asking when Marin is going to get this started.”

“I am so pleased with the leadership demonstrated by Mill Valley Refuse and the Redwood Landfill in bringing food waste composting to Marin County,” said Carol Misseldine, Sustainability Director with the City of Mill Valley. “Composting food scraps not only eliminates the greenhouse gas emissions from these materials when

they're landfilled, but also serves to create a nutritious soil amendment. Food scraps composting will help us achieve our Zero Waste goal, and I encourage everyone to participate fully."

"Neighboring counties of San Francisco and Alameda have had this service available for years, and it is surprising Marin is so far behind on this one," said Joan Irwin, Tiburon resident and Compost Educator with Full Circle Food/Energy. "One of the best things we each could do is to compost our food scraps; it reduces what goes into landfills while it feeds the earth. Since many people cannot compost in their backyards, curbside pickup of food scraps in green bins is the next best thing. I am frequently asked in my composting classes why we don't have it. I respond, if you want it, tell your city council members, city manager, district representatives. It is in our hands."

The current proposal from Mill Valley Refuse Service covers only residential food waste collection. Restaurants and supermarkets cannot participate at this time because the larger amounts of food waste generated by businesses would raise the ratio of food waste to yard waste beyond what The Redwood Landfill and Recycling Center is permitted to accept. Redwood is currently working on a demonstration project with the County to show it can safely accept these higher levels of food content and will offer this service to its customers upon completion of the project, anticipated later this summer. Another food-to-energy project in the works through the Central Marin Sanitation Agency would be able to handle food waste from commercial generators. Mill Valley Refuse will participate in that project when it comes online, Iavarone said.

The cost of adding residential routes to handle the new weekly service schedule for food waste composting averages \$3 to \$4 per month for customers in areas serviced by MVRS, according to the company. If approved, MVRS would begin a campaign to educate its customers about what can and cannot be composted in a variety of ways including posted information on their website, [www.millvalleyrefuse.com](http://www.millvalleyrefuse.com), and public workshops held in partnership with the Environmental Forum of Marin.

"To produce good, clean compost," Iavarone said, "it will be important for everyone to be sure they know exactly what can and cannot go in the composting carts. Basically, food waste, food-soiled paper and yard waste are okay, but no pet waste, diapers, plastic of any kind—including so-called bio-degradable plastic—glass or metal."

Food waste collection for composting has already started in San Francisco and the East Bay. Marin's Redwood Landfill and Recycling Center now has its permit to accept residential food waste mixed with yard waste for composting. If approved by town councils and sanitation boards in May or June, Mill Valley Refuse Service will be able to provide this service by July or August at the latest.

"We've already got the routes planned and the trucks available," Iavarone said, "We'll just need a short time after approval to hire qualified drivers, send out educational flyers and conduct the workshops so the program can be successful from the start."