

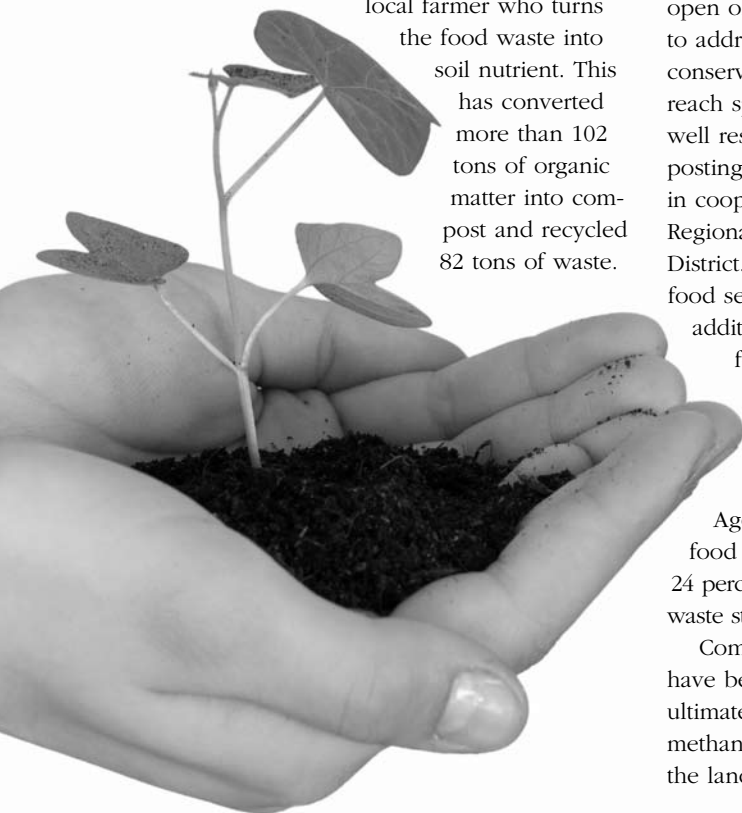
Community Based Nutrient Management

SUZI ZAKOWSKI

Balancing environmental stewardship and luxury are an increasing issue for hospitality management experts. The more components you add to the equation, the trickier the balance becomes. Yet, Stowe Mountain Resort has won another award for environmental excellence and has done so while maintaining the high standards the guests expect at the resort in Vermont.

CLIF® BAR, the leading organic-certified energy bar, has recognized Stowe Mountain Resort with a 2009 Silver Eagle Award for Environmental Excellence. The award hails the Stowe Mountain Resort for its leadership and innovation in waste reduction and recycling. Stowe Mountain Resort developed a stand-out waste reduction program by highlighting the power of food. The composting plan delivers impressive results—enjoying an 84.5 percent diversion rate. Stowe's program works with a local farmer who turns

the food waste into soil nutrient. This has converted more than 102 tons of organic matter into compost and recycled 82 tons of waste.



Those who are familiar with the resort might not be surprised. Since developing more amenities on the resort property, such as the Lodge, private residences, and the golf course, the management has made sure development is in strict adherence to an Environmental Charter designed to preserve the area's ecological viability. This includes designating 2,000 acres for wildlife preservation, using recycled storm water to irrigate the golf course, limiting pesticide use, implementing green building design to maximize water and energy conservation, and hosting local environmental education programs. The development and adoption of the Stowe Mountain Resort 2000 Community Master Plan was based on the objective to both reinvigorate and establish a sustainable future for the resort.

Because the Lodge was one of the final pieces of development to open on the property, opportunities to address waste reduction, resource conservation, and community outreach specifically for the Lodge were well researched. A resort-wide composting committee was established in cooperation with the Lamoille Regional Solid Waste Management District. Composting for the various food service sites at the lodge, in addition to the entire resort, was found to have significant environmental, social, and economic benefits if implemented. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, yard trimmings and food residuals together constitute 24 percent of the U.S. municipal solid waste stream.

Composting organic materials that have been diverted from landfills ultimately avoids the production of methane and leachate formulation in the landfills. The committee also

considered the community involvement in the process and the benefits to public and employee education. Economic benefits, including asset reallocation, generated revenue from marketing/public relations efforts, and cost savings, led to the conclusion that it costs a lot less to compost a ton of organic matter than it does to place it in the dumpster.

Many benefits, however, come from keeping the process local, and getting a return on the composted materials. If the product is used on-site, composting ultimately has the ability to prevent pollutants in stormwater runoff from reaching surface water resources and has also been shown to prevent erosion and silting on embankments parallel to creeks, lakes, and rivers, and prevents erosion and turf loss on roadsides, hillsides, playing fields, and golf courses.

The materials that are composted come from Solstice restaurant, Hourglass bar, Schuss gourmet shop, Aqua pool bar and the Lodge's associate dining area, and include fruits, vegetables, grains, meats, and compostable cups, plates, napkins, and utensils. In addition, all of the hotel's cut flower displays, yard materials, and grass clippings are composted. Due to the rich nutrient content, the resort can reduce the need for water, fertilizers, and pesticides. From May to December 2008, Stowe Mountain Lodge composted 204,500 lbs. of organic matter and recycled over 40,000 pounds of other recyclables. The resort has produced a landfill diversion rate of 84.5 percent, as compared to the statewide average of just over 30 percent. The documented savings of over \$8,600.00 from that period results from the diversion of disposal as municipal solid waste.

continued on page 11

Nutrient Management

Continued from page 8

Composting is made easy for employees by placing bins throughout the kitchens, so that all pre-consumer and post-consumer food materials can be easily gathered and separated from the trash. The associate dining area also has a compost bin that captures post-consumer food material during breakfast, lunch, and dinner breaks. The bins are emptied into 55 gallon drums, and then collected by Sanctuary Farms in Morrisville, VT.

Once the organic matter leaves the Lodge, a representative from the farm monitors it as it goes through three stages. The initial stage is the Mesophilic Stage, where microbes and organisms begin to break down material and the temperature starts to climb. The second phase is the Thermophilic Stage where the material reaches its highest temperature. The final phase is the Curing Phase, where the material decreases in temperature and stabilizes. The material is then turned and screened until the finished product is ready to be put back into the earth.

The product is being returned to the grounds of the resort, in a process called community-based nutrient management, which is the practice of generating organic material and utilizing this asset to achieve nutrient needs in the soil. By composting the organic matter generated and then



Composting is made easy for employees by placing bins throughout the kitchens, so that all pre-consumer and post-consumer food materials can be easily gathered and separated from the trash.

returning it to the grounds, Stowe Mountain Lodge closes the loop and returns nutrients back to the land. Stowe Mountain Lodge plans to bring 60 yards of farm-crafted compost back to the resort in the spring and add it to the hotel's landscape.

Spruce Peak at Stowe, the real estate component of the Stowe Mountain Resort Master Plan, has been recognized by Audubon International under the nationwide Sustainable Communities Program. Spruce Peak at Stowe has been praised by Audubon International for such sustainable development practices as energy efficiency, innovative stormwater collection and treatment, compact design and the use of native landscaping. In 2007 Stowe was the

first mountain resort in the U.S. to earn Audubon International's Green Community Award.

The Stowe Mountain Golf Club course has also received Signature Sanctuary Certification from Audubon International, and is one of only 63 golf courses in the world to have met these extremely high standards. This certification ensures that the golf course has been designed, constructed, and managed with a very comprehensive approach to environmental protection.

Finally, Stowe Mountain Lodge has also received specific designation through Audubon International, achieving a four out of five leaf rating in the organization's Green Leaf™ Eco-Rating Program for Hotels. In addition, the property is also designated a Green Hotel by the Vermont Green Hotel program. This program is a partnership between The Vermont Agency of Natural Resources and The Vermont Small Business Development Center, assisting and recognizing environmentally responsible hotels throughout Vermont.

Moving forward, Stowe Mountain Resort plans to compost all organic material generated throughout the entire development. The new Spruce Camp Base Lodge and the Stowe Mountain Golf Club Cottage have joined the composting effort. Being leaders in this movement exemplifies Stowe Mountain Resort's unrelenting commitment to environmental stewardship. ●

Coconut Creek, FL, earns Audubon Green Community Award

The City of Coconut Creek, FL, has earned the Audubon Green Community Award from Audubon International. The award will be presented at the City Hall on September 15th, 2009.

"The City of Coconut Creek has demonstrated a strong commitment to embodying the ideals of sustainability—economic vitality, environmental protection, and social responsibility," says Suzi Zakowski, Manager of the Sustainable Communities Program. "With the surrounding natural landscape of South Florida, Coconut Creek has much to celebrate. It is a unique place filled with residents, businesses, and community organizations that care deeply about the place they call home."

Coconut Creek is the first city in Florida to earn the Audubon Green Community Award for their ongoing green initiatives. Members of Audubon International's Sustainable Communities Program are eligible for the award, which recognizes environmental achievement and is an intermediate milestone on the way to earning rigorous designation as a Certified Audubon Sustainable Community.