



Managing Waste in CT Schools

Recycling ... It's the Law

CT has had mandatory recycling for a number of items in effect since January 1, 1991.

Everyone must recycle.

That includes residents whether living in a single or multi-family building, every business including non-profits, and all public and private agencies and institutions (e.g. colleges, hospitals, local and state government agencies).

It's the Law!



Items Designated (Mandated) for Recycling:

Mixed Recycling

- Glass & Metal Food & Beverage **Containers**
- Plastic **Containers** (PET or PETE #1)
- Plastic **Containers** (HDPE #2)
- Corrugated Cardboard
- Boxboard
- Newspaper
- Magazines
- White & Colored Office Paper

Blue Bin

- Scrap Metal, including appliances
- Ni-Cd Rechargeable Batteries (from consumer products)
- Waste Oil (crankcase oil from internal combustion engines)
- Leaves (must be composted)
- Lead Acid Battery or Motor Vehicle Batteries
- Commercially Generated Source Separated Organic Materials (Only applies to those businesses compelled to do so per CGS Section 22a-226e)
- **Banned from disposal:** televisions, computers, cellphones, mercury-containing products



**Which age group are
among the highest food
wasters?**

- A) 18-24 year olds
- B) 25-34 year olds
- C) 35-44 year olds
- D) 45-54 year olds

*According to WRAP's US segmentation analysis



Answer: 18-24 year olds!

Why?

One factor to consider: Many students grow up in schools without cafeteria share tables or food donation programs, where perfectly good, uneaten food is routinely thrown away. This reinforces the idea that leftover food is trash, rather than a resource to be shared or saved.

*According to WRAP's US segmentation analysis

Connecticut's Commercial Organics Recycling Law ([CORL](#))

- Public Act 11-217 passed in 2011, CT first state in nation to pass mandatory organics recycling law.
- In 2011 – waste generators generating 104 tons/year and within 20 miles of authorized facility, **in effect Jan 1, 2014.**
- In 2012 law reduced to 52 tons/year, **in effect Jan 1, 2020.**
- In 2012 law reduced to 26 tons/year, **in effect Jan 2, 2022.**
- In 2023 law expanded definition of waste generators, removed 20-mile radius, **in effect January 1, 2025.**
- In 2023 law added that waste generators are required to submit report on amount of donated food & food scraps diverted, **in effect March 1, 2025.** [LINK TO ANNUAL REPORT.](#)
- In 2024, [PA 24-45](#) – added K-12 schools that generate 26 tons annually or more *and* are within 20-mile radius of authorized facility, **in effect July 1, 2026.**
- [Executive Order 21-3, Sec. 3\(A\)](#) – **By 2024**, executive branch agencies shall implement organics and food waste diversion programs. Impacts 18 technical schools.





Connecticut's Commercial Organics Recycling Law (CORL)

- Triggered Organic Waste Generators:
 - Commercial food wholesalers or distributors
 - Industrial food manufacturers or processors
 - Supermarkets
 - Resorts and conference centers
 - **As of 2025:** Institutions – any establishment engaged in providing hospitality, entertainment or rehabilitation and health care services, and any hospital, educational facility or correctional facility.
 - **As of 2026:** K-12 Schools - Public or non-public school building or educational facility, if they generate 26 tons/year *and* are within 20 miles of authorized facility.

Public Act 24-45

Sec. 6(a)(5) On and after July 1, 2026, each public or nonpublic school building or educational facility in which students in grades kindergarten to twelve, inclusive, or any combination thereof, are enrolled, that is located not more than twenty miles from either an authorized source separated organic material composting facility and that generates an average projected volume of not less than twenty-six tons per year of source-separated organic materials shall:

Separate such source separated organic materials from other solid waste;

and ensure that such source-separated organic materials are recycled at any authorized source-separated organic material composting facility that has available capacity and that will accept such source-separated organic material.



Is My School Triggered by the Law?

COMMERCIAL ORGANICS RECYCLING LAW SCHOOLS - PUBLIC ACT 24-45



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GENERATE 26 TONS PER
YEAR

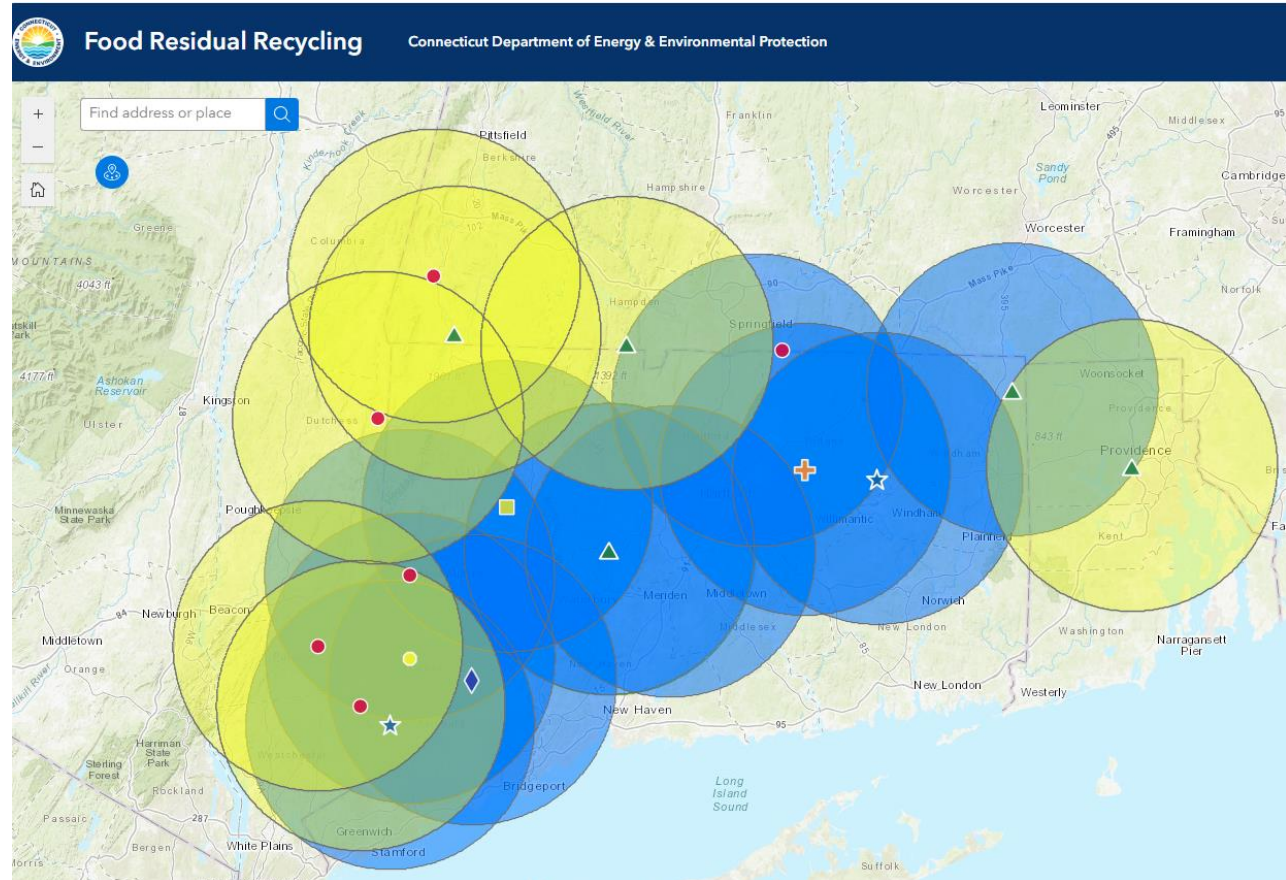
20 MILES FROM AUTHORIZED
COMPOST SITES

SUBJECT TO THE LAW



Is My School Triggered by the Law?

- School building is not more than **twenty miles** from an **authorized source** separated **organic material composting facility** and...



[Source: CT DEEP GIS Map of Food Residual Recycling](#)

Processing Compost Facilities

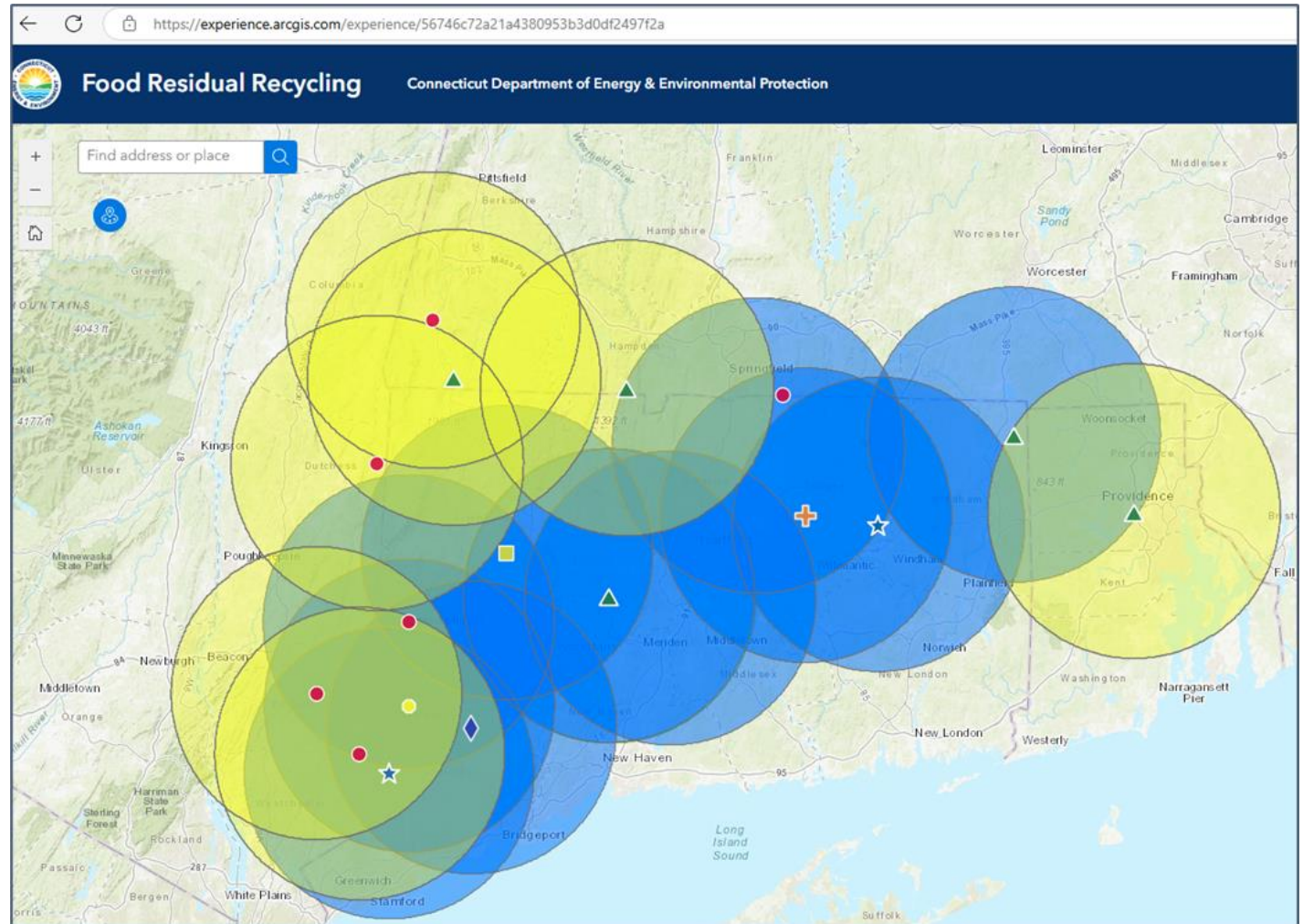
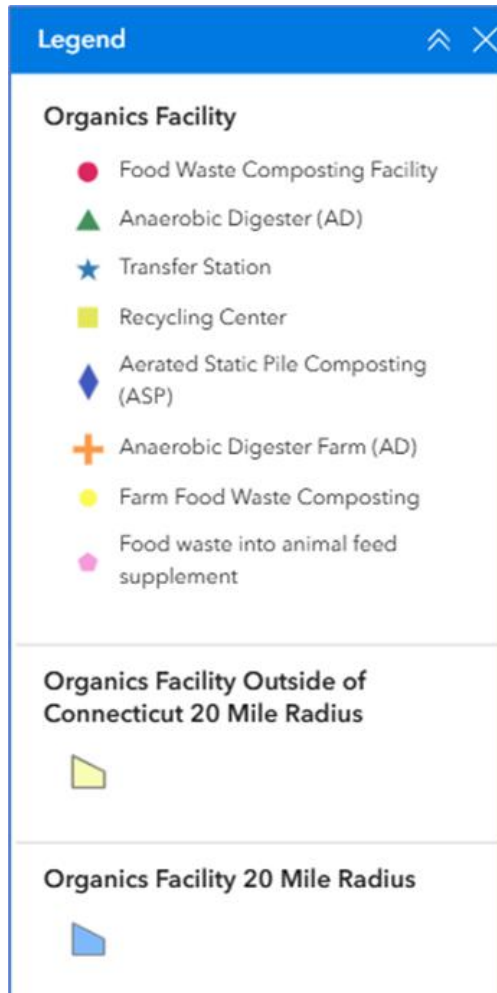
Facilities in Connecticut that Process Food Scraps

- Bright Feeds in Berlin
- Hytone Farm AgGrid in Coventry
- New England Resources, LLC in Danbury
- WeCare Denali New England, Ellington
- Litchfield Recycling Center in Litchfield
- Mansfield Transfer Station in Mansfield
- New Milford Farms in New Milford
- Newtown Transfer Station in Newtown (*under construction*)
- Ridgefield Transfer Station in Ridgefield
- Quantum BioPower in Southington
- Fort Hill Farm AgGrid in Thompson

Facilities Across the Border that Process Food Scraps

- McEnroe Organic Farm in Millerton, NY
- Mother Nature's Farms, Inc. in Carmel, NY
- Snow Hill Farm, LLC in North Salem, NY
- Sheffield Foods/Biosphere Farms in Sheffield, MA
- Pine Island Farm in Sheffield, MA
- Rockwood Ag-Grid, LLC in Granville, MA
- Shadow Valley Farm in Somers, MA
- Anaergia Rhode Island in Johnston, RI

Determine the Distance to a Processing Compost Facility



[Source: CT DEEP GIS Map of Food Residual Recycling](https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/56746c72a21a4380953b3d0df2497f2a)

Determine the Annual Estimates of Food Scraps/ SSOM Generation

- ... the school generates an average projected volume of not less than **twenty-six tons per year** of food scraps/ SSOM.



Photo: Cider Mill Hill, Elementary School, Wilton, CT.

Center for Ecotechnology (CET) Wasted Food Estimation Guide

CET's calculator provides separate estimates of food scraps/ SSOM generation per student, based only on lunch data.

Concept	Average	Measurement	Material
Students [Elementary School]	1.13	lbs/student/week	SSOM
Students [Middle School]	0.73	lbs/student/week	SSOM
Students [High School]	0.35	lbs/student/week	SSOM
Disposed Waste ¹	45	% of disposed waste by weight	SSOM

Example Calculation To Estimate Annual School Generation

If you have **885 elementary school students**, then:

$1.13 \text{ lbs/student/week} \times 885 \text{ students} = 1,000 \text{ lbs/week} = 0.5 \text{ ton of SSOM per week}$

Source: [Connecticut Food Waste Estimation Guidance • CET](#)

CET's Wasted Food Estimation Guide

Important! CET's calculator provides separate estimates of food scraps/SSOM generation per student, based **ONLY** on lunch data.

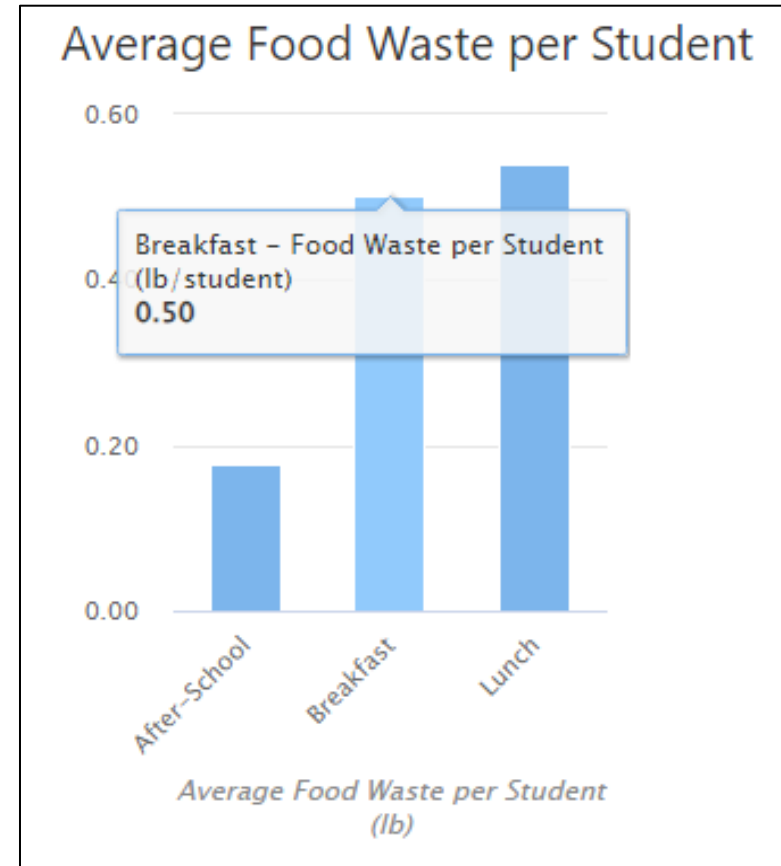


What other food programs offered by schools should be considered when estimating total food scraps generation?

- breakfast,
- classroom snacks,
- teacher's room,
- kitchen food waste,
- culinary classrooms,
- afternoon/weekend and / or summer meals

World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Food Waste Warriors Database

The WWF's Food Waste Warrior program collects data from school waste audits nationwide, including breakfast and after-school meals.




Source: [WWF Food Waste Warrior Dashboard](#).

Highlights on DEEP's Calculations

Municipality	School	Grade	No. Students	Board/Private/Public/Technical School	Est. lbs of waste/student /week	Est. lbs waste /week	No. of Student Days /School Year	No. of Student Weeks /School yr	Est. lbs/school year	Est. Tons / School Year	Within 20 mi. threshold?	Breakfast? YES/NO	# of Breakfast Meals Claimed	Est. tons of Breakfast Waste / School Year	Est. Tons Lunch + Breakfast / School Year
Bridgeport	Blackham School	K-8	1068	Public	1.13, 0.73	1005.62	182	36.4	36604.57	18.30	Yes	N/A	0	0.00	18.30
Bridgeport	Cesar Batalla School	PK-8	1054	Public	1.13, 0.73	1003.21	182	36.4	36516.84	18.26	Yes	Yes	151,381	7.57	25.83
Bridgeport	Geraldine Johnson School	K-8	806	Public	1.13, 0.73	910.78	182	36.4	33152.39	16.58	Yes	Yes	85,318	4.27	20.84
Bridgeport	Read School	K-8	730	Public	1.13, 0.73	824.9	182	36.4	30026.36	15.01	Yes	Yes	87,274	4.36	19.38
Bristol	West Bristol School	K-8	819	Public	1.13, 0.73	825.47	182	36.4	30047.11	15.02	Yes	Yes	68,163	3.41	18.43
Brookfield	Candlewood Lake Elementary	K-5	1080	Public	1.13	1220.4	182	36.4	44422.56	22.21	Yes	N/A	0	0.00	22.21
Cheshire	HighLand School	K-6	818	Public	1.13	924.34	182	36.4	33645.98	16.82	Yes	Yes	31,606	1.58	18.40
Danbury	Danbury HS	HS	3590	Public	0.35	1256.5	182	36.4	45736.6	22.87	Yes	Yes	54,800	2.74	25.61
Greenwich	Greenwich High School	HS	2,666	Public	0.35	933.1	182	36.4	33964.84	16.98	Yes	Yes	42,610	2.13	19.11
Greenwich	Greenwich Country Day School	K-12	1441	Private	1.13, 0.73, 0.35	982.04	182	36.4	35746.26	17.87	Yes	N/A	0	0.00	17.87
Greenwich	Eagle Hill School	K-9	265	Boarding	See waste per	See waste	182	36.4	37563.75	18.78	Yes	N/A	0	0.00	18.78
New Canaan	Saxe Middle School	5th-8th	1,315	Public	1.13, 0.73	1082.75	182	36.4	39412.1	19.71	Yes	N/A	0	0.00	19.71
Norwalk	Winston Preporatory School*	K-12	1380	Private	1.13	1559.4	182	36.4	56762.16	28.38	Yes	N/A	0	0.00	28.38

*no breakdown of # students per grade

Data Source: CET Calculator and WWF data for breakfast average.



Highlights on DEEP's Calculations – What we've learned so far

- **A school will most likely reach 26 tons of food waste/year if:**
 - K-5 school with an enrollment of $\approx 1,000$ students
 - Middle School with an enrollment that is $> 1,200$ students
 - HS with an enrollment of $\approx 2,000$ students
- **... especially if the schools serve breakfast and/or have culinary classes**
- Private Schools usually do not trigger the law
- **So far:** 2 schools meet the food waste threshold set by the law, with 17 additional schools nearing this threshold
- **Once Final Calculations are complete:** Estimated that ≈ 15 -20 schools will meet the threshold, with roughly 65-85 schools approaching the threshold.

School Waste Audit

Consider conducting a waste audit in your school to gain a complete understanding of your school's food scraps/ SSOM generation:



Learn which kinds of foods go uneaten by students
Opportunity to REDUCE waste generation and proper recycling



Turn your school building into classroom
Learn the best set up for a school food scraps program



Evaluate the collected data to determine how to reduce food waste and whether your school meets the legal threshold of 26 tons of food scraps/ SSOM per year

Renegotiate waste contract with hauler and reorganize logistics and location of external bins



Source: [Umatilla, OR School District.](#)

What if you're not triggered by law?

- Your school can voluntarily create a program of food sharing, donation or food scrap collection for composting.
- If your District has only one or a few schools triggered, you can include all schools in your District.
- You may find it helpful for students to have consistent program in all schools and may also find some cost savings at the District level.



Picture: West Hartford School

In Summary: Recycling

- Schools should be collecting and recycling all mandatory recyclables they generate in:
 - School buildings
 - School grounds
 - Ballparks & athletic fields
- Great place to start:
 - Paper in offices and classrooms,
 - Cardboard
 - Metal and plastic containers in kitchens



In Summary: Food Scraps/SSOM

- Start planning for when your school may be required to collect food scraps.
 - Consider conducting a food sort
 - Identify teachers/classrooms to help coordinate:
 - Collecting food scraps,
 - Set up a food sharing table,
 - Collect milk, juice and other liquids in a bucket
 - Container for mixed recycling (single stream) such as plastic and metal cans and bottles and empty milk cartons)
 - Collect/stack trays and utensils (if reusable), and;
 - Container for trash.



In Summary: Plan for Additional Costs

- Identify the direct and indirect costs associated with food scrap collection:
 - Staff to oversee collection, could be with students, to ensure no contamination
 - Cafeteria and school building collection system, working with maintenance/facility staff
 - Food scraps hauler/collector, could be same or different than waste/recycling hauler
 - Or, consider composting food scraps on-site

SET UP COST ESTIMATES FROM CT SCHOOLS

SET UP – Cost \$400 - \$5,850*

Waste Sorting Stations

Standard Stations usually have a recycle, trash, and compost bins and a table for students to sort their trash

Bins across different areas of the school building to also collect food scraps/ SSOM

Food Scraps/ SSOM Hauling & Bags – Monthly Costs \$750-\$1,131,41*

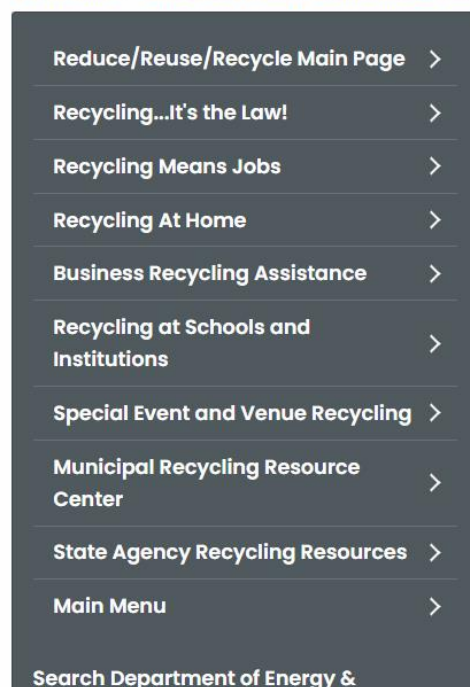
Hauler might provide containers, pick-up, and processing

Costs can vary depending on the total amount of material collected, the distance from the school to an authorized food scraps/ SSOM processing facility, and disposal costs

***Disclaimer:** The costs shown in this slide were provided to DEEP by schools in Connecticut that are already collecting food scraps from their cafeterias. Please note that the maximum and minimum amounts are averages and do not necessarily reflect the actual highest and lowest costs associated with the program. DEEP cannot confirm accuracy.



[CT.gov Home](#) / [Department of Energy & Environmental Protection](#) / [Reduce, Reuse, Recycle](#) / [Grade School Recycling Resources](#)



School Recycling and Composting Resources Managing Materials Sustainably in Connecticut

Managing waste and materials from your school is much broader than collecting paper, bottles and cans for recycling. To have a strong sustainable program that is fiscally responsible and environmentally sound administrators, facility staff, teachers, students and their parents should be involved in creating programs that are engaging and easy to maintain.

Recycling, It's the Law: Recycling has been mandatory in Connecticut for many items and has been in effect since January 1, 1991, with additional materials added in 2012. Schools are not exempt. Review [CT Mandatory Recycling](#) to learn more about items required to be collecting for recycling in Connecticut.

Food Scraps Law: In 2024, Connecticut passed a law which states if a school building (public, private, religious, charter or boarding school) generates more than 26 tons per year of food scraps (incl. cafeteria, culinary program, school kitchen) and is within 20 miles of an authorized composting facility you must collect food scraps for composting starting July 1, 2026.

School Recycling and Composting Tool Kit

- [Your School is Legally Required to ... Recycle, Compost, and more](#) 
- [How to Set Up a Recycling Program at Your School \(incl. information about contracts, bins,](#)

New CT DEEP School Recycling Webpage & Tool Kit

Source: [Grade School Recycling Resources](#)

School Recycling: Sharing Tables, Donating Surplus & Collecting Food Scraps

April 14, 2025

3:30pm – 5:30pm

Register [here](#).

DEEP staff will review current recycling and composting laws, including Public Act 24-45 and Executive Order 21-3 and how they impact schools. DEEP will also share new tools and resources to support schools. There will be plenty of time for questions.

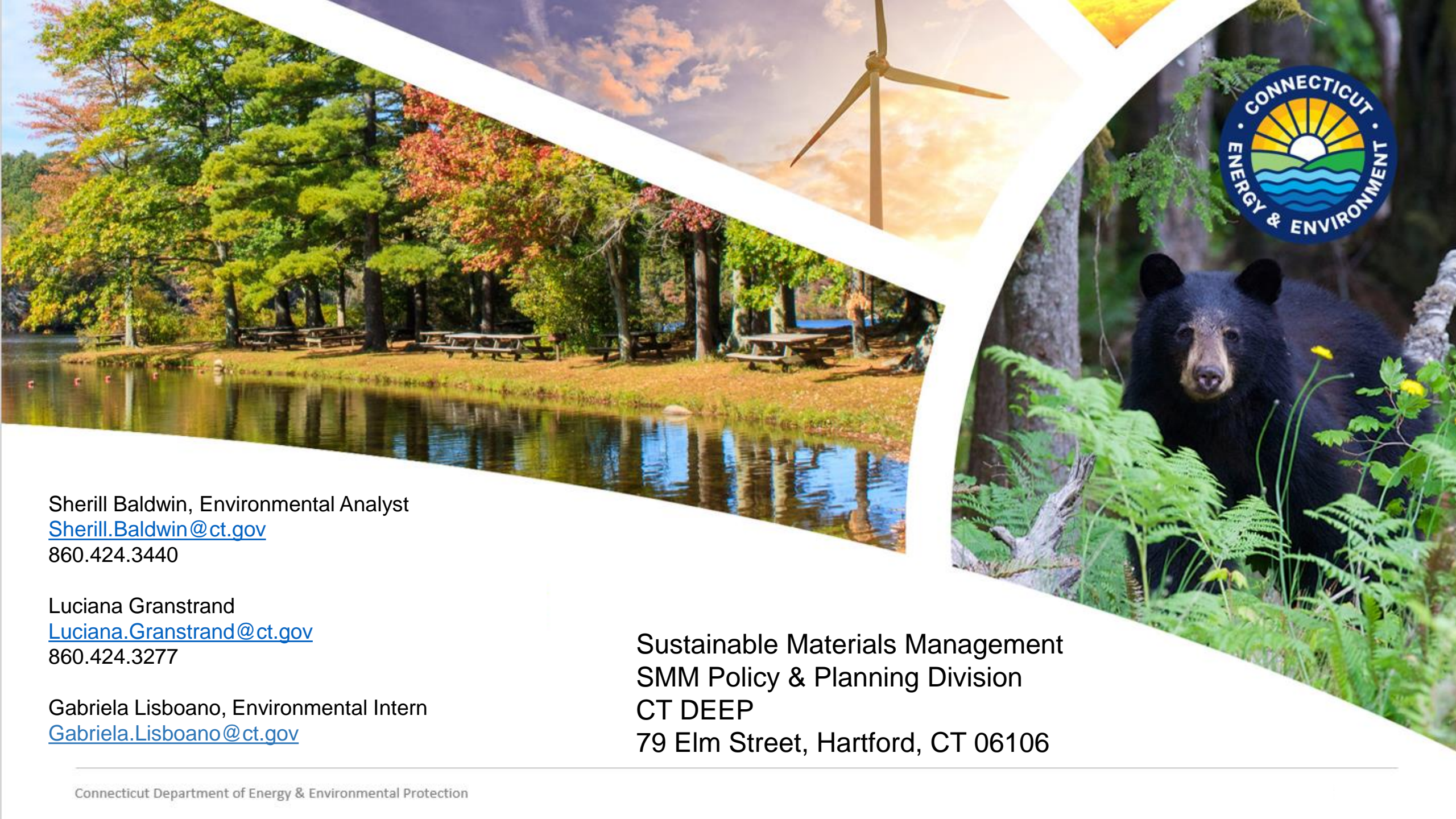


Resources

- [Food Donation by CT Schools: Guidelines and Resources](#) – provides overview of liability protections, sharing tables (internal donation) vs. donation (external donation)
- [Connecticut Food Donation: Liability Protections](#) – updated 2024!
- **NEW** – [School Recycling and Composting](#) webpage, with expanding tool kit!

Center for Eco Technology, under contract with DEEP to assist businesses, including some schools, come into compliance with recycling and organics recycling laws.

- reducewastect@cetonline.org 888.410.3827
- <https://www.cetonline.org/wasted-food-assistance-in-Connecticut/>



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