

# Frequently Asked Questions

## **Why is the Compost and BSM spec so rigid?**

Traditional landscaping and vegetable gardens are watered to encourage plant growth and health, while stormwater facilities collect water to treat, store, and transport water through the landscape. The specifications for compost and BSM are intended to create soil conditions that can optimize water quality treatment while also supporting healthy plant growth.

## **Why are manure or bio-solids not allowed in compost for LID in western Washington?**

Manure and bio-solids are not allowed because of their potential to contribute higher fecal coliform bacteria, increased nutrients, and other such contaminants to water supplies. In eastern Washington manure based feedstocks are permitted. Ongoing and future research on contaminant leachability from composts with variable feedstocks will help determine what feedstocks may be acceptable in the coming years.

## **What is an ideal feedstock for compost for LID?**

65% Green waste and 35% Food waste feedstock are acceptable for LID compost. In general, the cleaner the feedstock the better the performance in an LID application. The less chemical residue or potential pathogen contamination present, the better the resulting compost or BSM will be for treating water quality. As a general rule, if there is a contamination source in the filtration media, a portion of those contaminants are likely to end up in our water.

## **What is the anticipated demand for LID compost in the coming years?**

The exact amount is unknown, but we do know that stormwater LID is becoming a mandatory method for developing or redeveloping property in western Washington. That means a lot more compost and bioretention soil media will be needed to support this new type of development. As an example, King County anticipates needing 100,000 cubic yards of BSM over a 10 year period to support their combined sewer overflow (CSO) control plan.

## **How can I reduce liability as much as possible when selling compost to LID project contractors?**

Begin with a clear contract and outline the chain of custody expectations for the compost from creation to application. While the compost is being processed, protect and clearly label each pile for each project. Have a client or client representative examine and approve the product before it leaves the site and as it is loaded for delivery. Once the product is loaded, transfer chain of custody to document that a satisfactory produce left your hands.

## **How long does it take to go through the STA certification process?**

The first step is to locate a feedstock and produce a compost that can meet the spec. This process could take 6-10 weeks. Next a sample must be tested and the results submitted to the U.S. Composting Council (another 4 weeks). If the specification is met and no further refinement of your product is required, then you can expect certification within 4 weeks. In total, a 3-4 month process.

## **How do you anticipate the regulations regarding compost in LID to change in the coming years?**

As water quality regulations become more restrictive the need for improved stormwater filtration will increase. This will likely result in bioretention soil mix standards which include additional media components (e.g., ground oyster shells or BioChar) or tighter specifications on the compost and sand fractions in the existing specification (e.g., lower nutrient and metals content).

## **Who do I contact if I have additional questions about Ecology specifications for compost and bioretention soil mixes?**

Contact Doug Howie at the Washington State Department of Ecology ([doho461@ECY.WA.GOV](mailto:doho461@ECY.WA.GOV)).