

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Half-eaten apples, wilted lettuce, and moldy bread are just some examples of the over 11 billion pounds of food waste that enters California landfills each year. Most food waste can be prevented through changes in shopping habits, how it is stored, and by planning meals wisely. In Tehama County we put about 15 million pounds of food waste in our landfill each year, which comprises about 15% of the total amount of waste that enters our landfill. So why does it matter how much food waste enters our landfill? When food waste is buried in a landfill the moisture in the food aids in breaking it down which produces methane, a greenhouse gas 25 times more potent than carbon dioxide. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, landfills are the third largest source of methane emissions in the U.S.

Recognizing the issues associated with food waste and to aid in the statewide goal of diverting 75% of materials from landfills, the state of California passed new legislation requiring the diversion of food waste and other “organics” from landfills. The term “organics” is defined as food waste, green waste, landscape and pruning waste, nonhazardous wood waste, and food-soiled paper such as paper plates and fast food wrappers. The legislation requires that by April of 2016 any business that generates 8 or more cubic yards of organics each week to recycle their organic waste, with the amount generated decreasing each year so that smaller businesses and apartments will eventually have to comply. Currently Tehama County businesses are exempt from the legislation because our population is below 70,000 people. Despite Tehama County being exempt, food waste can be kept out of our landfill through composting, anaerobic digestion, or other forms of diversion. Unwanted edible food can be donated at these locations: Tehama County Gleaners-Foodbank, (530) 529-2264; Tehama County Senior Nutrition Programs, (530) 527-2414; Corning Christian Assistance, (530) 824-3866.

While food waste is not currently being diverted from our landfill, there are steps that our county residents can take now to help decrease the amount of food waste and organics going to our landfill. Backyard composting is a great way to keep food waste out of the trash can while also providing nutrient rich soil amendments for gardening and landscaping. The Tehama County Solid Waste Management Agency provides free information on composting and our Recycling Coordinator will give free composting demonstrations to schools, community groups, clubs, or other organizations. To contact the Recycling Coordinator call (530) 528-1103 or email tehamacountyrecycles@co.tehama.ca.us.

To keep food from going to waste in the first place residents can practice some of these food saving tips from the West Coast Climate & Materials Management Forum, found on their

website <http://westcoastclimateforum.com/food>. By purchasing food, especially perishable foods, based on what meals will be made and shopping your pantry before going to the grocery store will help you to avoid buying items that may go bad before eating them, and save you money. Store fruits and vegetables in ways that keep them fresh longer; bananas, apples, and tomatoes should be stored separately because the gases they give off help to ripen other fruits and vegetables more quickly. Finally, do not forget about the leftovers, storing them in a special place in the refrigerator will help you remember to use them up.

Keeping food out of our landfill will not only help to reduce the amount of methane being produced and help extend the life of the landfill it will also help conserve resources such as water which is very important in California. To put it in perspective, it is estimated that each apple that is thrown out before being eaten is equivalent to flushing the toilet seven times! This is because of the water used to grow each piece of fruit. While less food entering our landfill means less revenue going to the landfill, it also means that more resources like water will be conserved and fewer potent methane gases emitted.

For more information please contact the Tehama County Solid Waste Management Agency at 530.528.1103 or email tehamacountyrecycles@co.tehama.ca.us.