



# Media Information

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## Pilot Program At Grand Teton National Park Informs Future Of Composting In Teton County

Jackson, Wyo. , Nov 8, 2017 - As part of the Zero-Landfill Initiative, Teton County is making great inroads with new composting waste removal efforts. The Zero-Landfill Initiative is a collaboration between Subaru of America, Inc., National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA), the National Park Service (NPS) and park concessioners to reduce the amount of visitor-generated waste that national parks send to the landfills. Collaborators spent the summer targeting the one material that is believed to comprise up to 40 percent of Teton County's waste stream - food. Capturing and composting non-edible food waste is the next major step in the County's efforts to significantly reduce waste going to landfills.

As part of the Subaru, NPCA and NPS-led Zero-Landfill Initiative, Grand Teton National Park and its concessioners Grand Teton Lodge Company and Signal Mountain Lodge have improved their waste infrastructure by raising public awareness around the trash problem at national parks and surrounding communities, and educating employees and visitors on how to lessen their environmental footprint. Teton County is playing an important role by contracting hauling services and coordinating collection logistics among the pilot project participants.

"At Subaru, we believe in preserving Earth's natural wonders for generations to come and are honored to continue our partnership with the National Parks Conservation Association and National Park Service to shine a light on and reduce visitor-generated waste in national parks," said **Denise Coogan, environmental partnerships manager, Subaru of America, Inc.** "The great strides Grand Teton National Park has made exemplifies the power of the Zero-Landfill Initiative and how we can all work together to reduce our environmental footprint."

As part of this composting pilot program, food waste was gathered from a total of seven collection sites at Grand Teton Lodge Company and Signal Mountain Lodge – the two prominent lodging facilities in Grand Teton National Park. County-contracted waste hauler Westbank Sanitation, provided collection services to transport the material from these facilities once a week, to the composting facility in West Yellowstone, Montana. From there, the finished compost was made available to the public and utilized in mine reclamation and also in excavation and road projects within Yellowstone National Park.

Total food waste composted was 73.3 tons (146,620 pounds), with an average of 3.3 tons per week (6,663 pounds). While early estimates anticipated totals near 150 tons, several of the sites were unable to participate for portions of the program, due to lack of space for bins, wildlife concerns and other logistical challenges. "These are exactly the kinds of issues the pilot program was designed to bring to the surface," said **Heather Overholser, superintendent of solid waste and recycling for Teton County.**

The addition of food waste to Teton County's existing composting program, which is currently for yard waste only, is planned by 2021. "Food waste is heavy," explains Overholser. "Removing it from the waste stream will significantly reduce annual tonnages sent to the landfill," a number the County hopes to reduce by 35 percent by 2030. "Another reason for the focus on food waste is that the degradation of organic materials in a landfill produces leachate as well as methane, a potent greenhouse gas."

"If Subaru can build cars using these Zero-Landfill Initiative practices, imagine what we can do at our national parks," said Jamie Varner, senior director for National Parks Conservation Association. "We want to translate some of the best practices of Subaru to parks across the country, starting with three pilot parks: Grand Teton, Denali and Yosemite. We're already seeing great results with this innovative and collaborative partnership."

The Zero-Landfill Initiative is the first of its kind in bringing public and private partnerships to address critical natural resources issues in our national parks. This partnership includes nine entities including Grand Teton and Yellowstone National Parks and their gateway communities. The private-sector run concessioner operations manages the lodging, food and beverage and retail services at the park, which are all critical components to the success of the Zero-Landfill Initiative. Together, park concessioners are managing more than 60 percent of all waste that is generated in the pilot parks, with a significant portion of that brought in by visitors that ultimately shows up in park campgrounds and trailheads. In addition to the composting efforts, concessioners are focusing on reducing waste generated in their own operations and helping the park and its visitors be educated and engaged in zero landfill practices.

"Over 40 percent of the waste generated in the park is food waste," said **Grand Teton National Park planner Margaret Wilson**. "To truly make a difference in our diversion rates, we need to be able to effectively compost, especially at our concession facilities where most of our food waste is created. It's exciting that nine federal, county, and private entities came together to develop systems for collection, storage, and transportation of compostable material. We hope these systems can serve as a model for others in Teton County and beyond."

Building upon this year's success, including a reported contamination rate as low as one percent, and armed with numerous other lessons learned, Teton County is motivated to find tangible solutions to further reduce our environmental footprint. The County attributes this early success to extensive staff training and dedication from concessioner staff and supervisors. "I sat in a chair next to the scraping bins in the employee dining room and made sure each staff member knew where everything went," said **Jon Dyer, Environmental Coordinator for Grand Teton Lodge Company**.

Topics the County hopes to address in the future is a strategy to maximize bin space on cramped loading docks and in storage areas at the lodging facilities, and whether or not compostable packaging like takeout food containers and plastic bags can be included in collection services. "Space for bins was a challenge at every collection site, as we expect it will be for area businesses when we begin municipal food waste collection," Overholser commented.

"We were really excited to be part of this important work and are already seeing the benefits," said **Erik Kimball, Food and Beverage director for Signal Mountain Lodge**. "Our staff has been talking about it internally for a long time and have taken a lot of pride in putting food composting into action and seeing strong results."

#### **About Teton County Integrated Solid Waste and Recycling**

The mission of Teton Integrated Solid Waste and Recycling (ISWR) is to reduce, reuse, recycle and manage solid waste throughout Teton County in an efficient and environmentally-sound manner. ISWR operates the Teton County Trash Transfer Station, the municipal composting program, the Recycling Center and the Household Hazardous Waste Collection Facility. Through these efforts, the County is working to minimize landfill bound waste. Current programs are successful in diverting 38% (or 34,000,000 million pounds) of discarded material per year from the landfill. The goal of the Road to Zero Waste initiative is 60% diversion by the year 2030. For additional information visit

[www.tetonwyo.org/recycle](http://www.tetonwyo.org/recycle). Follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

**About Subaru of America, Inc.**

[Subaru of America, Inc.](#) (SOA) is a wholly owned subsidiary of [Subaru Corporation](#) of Japan. Headquartered at a zero-landfill office in Cherry Hill, N.J., the company markets and distributes Subaru vehicles, parts and accessories through a network of more than 620 retailers across the United States. All Subaru products are manufactured in zero-landfill production plants and [Subaru of Indiana Automotive, Inc.](#) is the only U.S. automobile production plant to be designated a backyard wildlife habitat by the National Wildlife Federation. SOA is guided by the [Subaru Love Promise](#), which is the company's vision to show love and respect to everyone, and to support its communities and customers nationwide. Over the past 20 years, SOA has donated more than \$120 million to causes the Subaru family cares about, and its employees have logged more than 40,000 volunteer hours. As a company, Subaru believes it is important to do its part in making a positive impact in the world because it is the right thing to do. For additional information visit [media.subaru.com](#). Follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#).

**About National Parks Conservation Association**

Since 1919, the nonpartisan National Parks Conservation Association has been the leading voice in safeguarding our national parks. NPCA and its more than 1.3 million members and supporters work together to protect and preserve our nation's natural, historic, and cultural heritage for future generations. For more information, visit [www.npca.org](#).

**About Grand Teton Lodge Company**

With a mission to preserve, protect and inspire, Grand Teton Lodge Company is an authorized concessioner of the National Park Service within Grand Teton National Park operating the lodging, restaurants, tours and activities at Jackson Lake Lodge, Jenny Lake Lodge, Colter Bay Village and Flagg Ranch Company at Headwaters Lodge & Cabins, as well as the Jackson Hole Golf & Tennis Club, which is located just outside the park in Jackson Hole, Wyoming. GTLC is committed to a comprehensive systematic approach to sustainable business practices that preserve the environment, provide quality service, and offer a healthy and safe place for its guests and employees. For more information visit [www.gtlc.com](#).