

Feed The Beast: Organic Waste Collection in a Campus Food Court

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A 2012 grant from the State Energy Office was used to implement a program called Feed the Beast which was designed so that UW Oshkosh's Student Union could be a center for the campus's first organic waste separation bins. The separated organic matter was transported to the campus's waste-to-energy biodigester.



This dry fermentation biodigester uses microorganisms to decompose 6,000 tons of organic matter/year in an oxygen free environment. Biogas (mostly methane) is produced as a result. The unit can generate 400 kilowatt hours of output equalling approximately 8% of the university's electricity needs.

Step 1: Marketing and Educating

- Named the campaign, designed the beast in partnership with our marketing department
- Facebook (FeedTheBeastInReeveDining)
- Used pins, pledges, hand outs, games, and coupons as incentives to Feed the Beast
- Promotional video
- Table tents
- Articles in the college newspaper
- Hung posters



The Beast bins in Reeve Union

Step 2: Logistics of Implementation

- Partnered with Reeve Union, University Dining, and Sodexo, the official food service contractor for UWO
- Ordered bins, garbage collection carts
- Ordered biodegradable bags which lined the bins
- Figured the logistics of transporting the waste

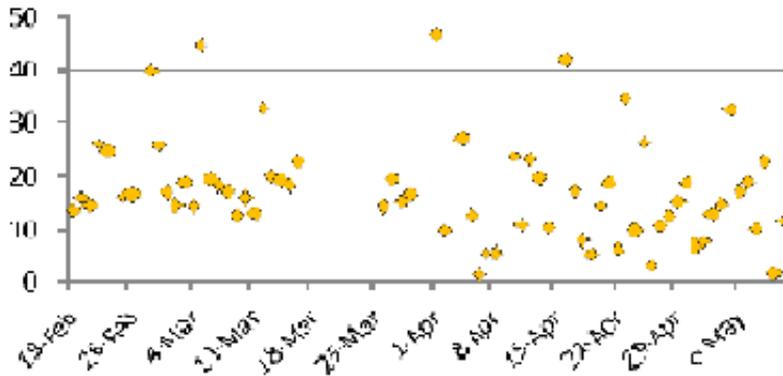
Step 3: Compostable Waste Collection

- Wastes were separated from February 29th to May 11th, 2012 by Reeve Union users into six Beast-themed containers which were coupled with trash and recycling bins (shown left)
- Contaminants and compostable materials were manually separated and their respective weights recorded daily
- Compostable waste was transported one mile from the main campus to the biodigester on a daily basis (shown below)

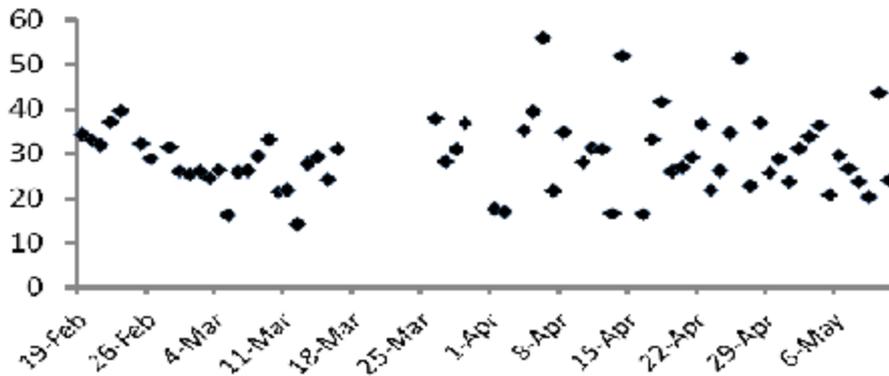


A week's worth of compostable/organic material at the biodigester in the biodegradable bags

Compostables (lbs/day)



Contamination (%)



Top graph is total compostable material per day collected in Reeve Union (median = 16 lbs/day). Lower graph is contamination as a percent of total waste collected in the Beast containers (median = 29%). Please note that the gap in March is Spring Break week.

Step 4: Results

- Contamination levels varied daily, but did not trend up or down over the course of the collection period
- Few recyclables were found in the Beast bins (15 lbs. through out the semester)
- Contaminants included pasta pans, plastics, straws, utensils, and wrappers
- The beast contributed an insignificant amount of the daily total organic wastes consumed by the biodigester

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