

Maine Food Waste Solutions Summit 2023 Questions & Answers by Summit Topic Resource List

Keynote Speakers

Linda Breggin & Margaret Badding, *Environmental Law Institute: Center for State, Tribal, and Local Environmental Programs*

Learn about the link between climate change and food waste – and how to easily incorporate food waste into climate action planning.

Q: What would be your first suggestion for a small town, of 10,000 people or less, at leveraging your framework to enact food waste solutions in their community?

A: From the Mitchell Center: The ELI Food Waste Initiative conducts research and works with stakeholders on food waste solutions. As such, they do exactly what you are asking – work with cities and towns to implement food waste solutions for their community. They recommend projects to: 1) increase food rescue, 2) build food scrap recycling infrastructure/community composting, and 3) include food waste in climate mitigation plans. Visit their website to see the variety of tools and options for your town: <https://www.eli.org/food-waste-initiative>.

Q: Could you explain how food waste represents 4% of municipal emissions, but globally food waste is the 5th biggest contributor?

A: From the Mitchell Center: It could be a base issue where the 5th place also includes production, transportation, and other parts of the supply chain where the "municipal emissions" might have focused on household activities. Given that many studies show roughly 40% of food waste is household based, that 4% would (roughly) grow to 10% if you include of parts of the supply chain making 5th place more likely.

Q: How can we get a copy of the *Environmental Law Institute Toolkit for Incorporating Food Waste Into Municipal Climate Action Plans*?

A: <https://www.eli.org/research-report/toolkit-incorporating-food-waste-municipal-climate-action-plans>

Q: Can you put a clickable link to the *Environmental Law Institute* website on the slide?

A: <https://www.eli.org/food-waste-initiative/publications>

Q: I live in a city with pay-as-you-throw trash system (you pay per bag for small or large trash bags), and I see it causing a lot of illegal dumping and other trash issues. Would love more info on how to mitigate this while still encouraging waste reduction!

A: From the Mitchell Center: Here's a quick "pay as you throw" resource from the EPA:
<https://archive.epa.gov/wastes/conserve/tools/payt/web/html/faq.html>

Recommendations are "enforcement, education, and outlets". The enforcement part is hard as some citizens that are illegally dumping are having financial barriers which is why the "outlets" of public assistance programs run through the community are suggested to help with financial barriers to participation.

Claudia Fabiano, Environmental Protection Specialist - EPA Sustainable Management of Food Team

Hear great food waste reduction, recovery, and recycling ideas from the EPA's Food: Too Good To Waste national peer network of state and local food waste organizations.

Q: These are all great social marketing messages from the *Food: Too Good To Waste Peer Network*. Which of them has been shown to resonate the most with the public?

A: A pretty big question that's not easily answered; however, our (EPA) *Wasted Food Prevention Toolkit* will be out in less than a week, and I think it will provide a lot of guidance to point you in the right direction.

For the Mitchell Center: We will add the *EPA Wasted Food Prevention Toolkit* link to the resource page on our website, as soon as available. From our experience, we find that these different messages have been developed by different states to resonate with their audience; so we try to test and use the message that resonates best with Maine people.

Summit Sessions

I. Maine Food Waste Success Stories: Lessons from Maine's own food waste heroes...

Hannaford Supermarkets: Zero Food Waste Program, George Parmenter

Q: Does each store report their diversion tonnages and receiving partners? It would be nice to know where stores are channeling excess food.

A: Hannaford does have internal data on where the food goes; we track donations monthly by store.

Q: What about the last option – "composting" for Hannaford?

A: We love composters and at one point in time had relationships with nearly 20 composters across the northeast.

Q: Are there Maine sourced grants (DECD, DEP, AG) for small business development that would help startup composting businesses that could cover all ME regions, doing food waste pickups, creating compost, helping farms, adding small business enterprises in rural areas?

A: From the Mitchell Center: Maine DEP offers Food Waste Diversion Grants exactly for this purpose. Scrap Dogs Community Compost got their start with the help of this grant program.

<https://www.maine.gov/dep/sustainability/compost/grant.html>

Scrap Dogs Community Compost, Tessa Rosenberry & Davis Saltonstall

Q: Are people putting plastic or other trash in your bins?

A: We're lucky that our contamination rate has been minimal, and we remove any plastics and other contaminants by hand as needed. We continuously educate and remind our customers of what we can and can't accept in the buckets to make sure we maintain a low contamination level in our piles.

From the Mitchell Center: We also have a community food recycling startup guide that has signage and brochures that can be used to educate and remind residents what materials SHOULD and SHOULD NOT go into food recycling/composting - <https://umaine.edu/foodrescuemaine/community-startup-guide/>

Q: You are clearly filling a need...can you come to Lincoln County?

A: From the Mitchell Center: Scrap Dogs Community Compost is a Maine food waste solutions success. As such, they are continuing to expand their composting business - and community enthusiasm is certainly a consideration! We will continue to report on new Maine service areas as added.

II. Maine Food Waste Student Pilots: Updates from our student interns and stakeholders...

- **Food Rescue & Food Donation Pilots:** *Rockland AIO Food Pantry, Community Fridges*

Q: Is Maine doing better or worse than the national average of 3% of food waste being rescued?

A: For the Mitchell Center: According to the [ReFED food waste insights engine](#), Maine is doing better at food rescue than the national average rate. The most recent 2021 ReFED data shows that the average U.S. food donation rate was 1.9% while Maine's rate was 2.8%.

- **School Food Waste Reduction Pilots:** *Buxton, Lisbon, Orono, Sebago Elementary Schools*

Q: I am very interested in more information on each step you do as I am a SNAP-Educator in Somerset County and would love to implement this in the near future as a part of a PSE!! Any information you could send me would be appreciated.

A: Thanks for your interest – we will be posting ALL the information on our Maine Cafeteria Food Waste Study on our [UMaine/Mitchell Center website](#) for use statewide! If you have any questions or need more specific assistance, please let us know and we'll be happy to help!

Q: Safety consistently comes up as a point of resistance towards sharing leftover lunch food- would you be willing to share the guidance/ documentation you received from the health department?

A: <https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/environmental-health/el/site-files/handouts/Food-Sharing-Tables-Guidance-for-Schools-052419.pdf>

Q: I'd love to hear more about minimizing contamination in food scrap collection in the elementary school cafeterias. Also, how could a school cafeteria start a "share basket" - will it require the health department?

A: To minimize contamination in food scrap collection in elementary schools, we used a variety of interventions – first: a kid-friendly sorting station with easy-access, labeled bins to keep trash and food scraps separate, second: photo signs on bins to show what goes where, and third: education/training to teach kids how and why to keep food scraps clean.

- To start a share basket, please see these guidelines from the Maine CDC. A share table can be easily implemented by simply following these rules:

<https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/environmental-health/el/site-files/handouts/Food-Sharing-Tables-Guidance-for-Schools-052419.pdf>

- From Bangor Public Health: Starting a share table usually means partnership with the school nutrition director, cafeteria staff, teachers, etc. at the school.

<https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/environmental-health/el/site-files/handouts/Food-Sharing-Tables-Guidance-for-Schools-052419.pdf>

- <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/use-share-tables-child-nutrition-programs>

Food Waste Solutions Resources

- Maine (Region 1) EPA Contact: beling.christine@epa.gov
Please feel free to reach out with any questions!
- U.S. EPA **Food: Too Good to Waste Peer Network**: to join, please email fabiano.claudia@epa.gov
- U.S. EPA **In the Loop** newsletter: to receive, sign up at <https://www.epa.gov/recyclingstrategy/forms/stay-connected>
- U.S. EPA Funding Opportunities: <https://www.epa.gov/sustainable-management-food/funding-opportunities-and-epa-programs-related-food-system>
- U.S. EPA Food Waste Research: <https://www.epa.gov/land-research/food-waste-research>
- U.S. EPA Model Recycling Program Toolkit: <https://www.epa.gov/recyclingstrategy/model-recycling-program-toolkit>
- U.S. EPA Food Waste Program Overview : <https://www.epa.gov/sustainable-management-food>
- Maine DEP: [Maine Solid Waste Diversion Grant Program](#) provides grants to public and private entities to assist in the development, implementation or improvement of programs, projects, initiatives or activities designed to increase the diversion of solid waste from disposal in the State.
- 1 Earth Composting Service (Bangor): for more information, email 1earthcomposting.com
- Good Shepherd Food Bank Capacity Grants to increase Maine food rescue and feeding: <https://www.gsfb.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/CP-Capacity-Building-Grant-2023-Presentation-2.pdf>
- Natural Resources Council of Maine (NRCM) school food waste program funding: for more information please email vberry@nrcm.org
- Maine School Cafeteria Food Waste Study: **NEWS CENTER Maine student interviews news video**: <https://www.newscentermaine.com/article/news/education/umaine-researchers-study-food-waste-in-school-cafeterias-university-of-maine-education/97-b7cd413d-5b8c-48ce-b487-49f928aab069>

For a variety of Maine Food Waste Solutions Resources for residents, organizations, schools, and municipalities, including recordings of all three of our Maine Food Waste Solution Summits, please visit our UMaine/Mitchell Center Food Waste Solutions Food Rescue MAINE website:

<https://umaine.edu/foodrescuemaine/>

If you have any questions or need more information, please contact foodrescuemaine@umaine.edu or call 207-581-3196



Maine Food – Too Good to Waste