



**Press Release  
For Immediate Release  
September 19, 2019**

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## **Salinas Valley Recycles Unwraps its Organics De-Packager**

### **Going “outside the bag” to battle climate change and meet State mandates for organics recycling**

(Salinas, CA) The Salinas Valley economy is driven by bountiful production of leafy greens and fresh produce that helps feed the nation and beyond. Earning the moniker “The Salad Bowl of the World” also comes with its challenges for the local community, as not every piece of lettuce makes it from the farm to table. Food waste accounts for approximately 18% or 34,240 tons of the overall waste-stream that enters Johnson Canyon Landfill (serving the greater Salinas Valley) annually. Packaging table-ready salads and produce in plastic creates difficulty in recovering organic materials for composting. To meet this challenge, the Salinas Valley Solid Waste Authority (a.k.a. Salinas Valley Recycles) has put a new de-packager into service to separate non-organic packaging from recoverable organic materials.

On August 26, 2019, the de-packager officially opened for business at the Johnson Canyon Landfill in Gonzales and has already processed 8 loads (over 60 tons) of packaged agricultural product from local ag processors. As the organic matter is liberated from its packaging, it is chopped into a “salsa” or slurry material ready for composting. Currently the organic slurry is stored in a tank before being sent to Carmel Area Wastewater District’s (CAWD) Anaerobic Digester for clean energy production. Salinas Valley Recycles will also begin accepting commercial collected food waste from restaurants and other food generators and turning this material into slurry for both composting and energy production.

The de-packager was purchased with funding from a \$1.34 million Organics Grant from California Climate Investments administered by the California Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery (CalRecycle). The Grant was awarded to Salinas Valley Recycles (SVR) in 2017 as part of a larger composting program development that includes expanding composting facilities at the Johnson Canyon Landfill, and an edible food rescue program in partnership with the Food Bank of Monterey County that will allow SVR to significantly increase the diversion of food waste generated by local ag processors, businesses and residents from being landfilled.

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After the Johnson Canyon composting facility expansion is complete (planned for late October 2019) the slurry produced in the de-packaging process will also serve as feedstock for the local full-scale composting operation. The technology that separates non-marketable organic produce from its packaging will help to initially divert 15,000 tons of food and packaged agricultural produce from the landfill annually with plans for future processing capacity, if needed. A grand opening of the de-packager and composting facility is being planned for November.

SVR serves businesses and residents of the Salinas Valley by providing sustainable, long-term waste management and resource recovery systems for its member (public) agencies, including managing the Johnson Canyon Landfill near Gonzales, and recycling and transfer stations strategically located in Salinas and King City. As part of SVR's ongoing effort to assist its agencies in meeting state mandates for waste diversion and recycling, the expansion of its organics recycling operation will contribute to achieving the statewide levels of organic waste disposal reduction and short-lived climate pollutant emission reductions required by the Short-Lived Climate Pollutants and Methane Emissions Reduction Strategy (Senate Bill 1383, Lara, 2016). As it pertains to CalRecycle, SB 1383 establishes targets to achieve a 50 percent reduction in the level of the statewide disposal of organic waste from the 2014 level by 2020 and a 75 percent reduction by 2025. Actions to reduce short-lived climate pollutants are essential to address the many impacts of climate change on human health, especially in California's most at-risk communities, and on the environment. Additionally, the expansion of the organics recycling operation will be key in helping the cities and the county fully implement their mandatory commercial organics recycling programs pursuant to Assembly Bill 1826 (Chesbro, 2014). This expansion will also contribute to achieving the statewide 75 percent recycling and greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) reduction goals outlined in AB 341 (Chesbro, 2011).

Keeping organic waste (including food scraps, yard waste, and wood waste) out of the landfill will also provide additional Greenhouse Gas reduction credits to assist member agencies with AB 32 compliance. Methane emissions resulting from the decomposition of organic waste in landfills are one of the identified sources of GHG emissions contributing to global climate change.

"The expansion of our composting operation is an important step in helping our ag industry including processors and food service providers, landscape businesses, and our member agencies meet increasingly strict mandates for resource recovery and greenhouse gas reduction," states Patrick Mathews, General Manager/Chief Administrative Officer for Salinas Valley Recycles. "Together with strategic ag and business partners, citizens and CAWD (and potentially Monterey One Water in the future), we are proud to provide a vital solution to critical issues. And while we can offer waste reduction programs, we recognize it takes active and conscious participation from businesses and residents to make them successful." SVR's first

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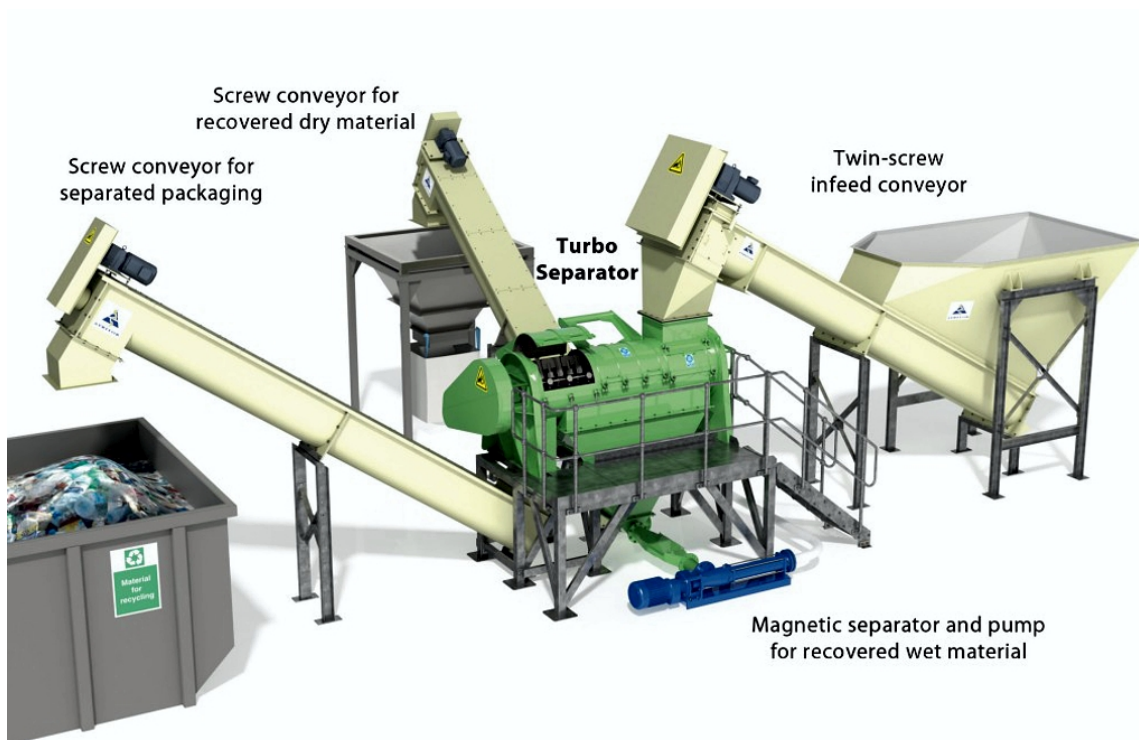
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loads to the de-packager came from Taylor Farms and Dole Fresh Vegetables, which have both been early adopters of the program.

Once the Gonzales site improvements are completed, a curbside mixed organics recycling program will be implemented to encourage the public to mix yard trimmings and food scraps together in existing curbside carts and containers, rather than the trash. This efficient approach eliminates the need to create a new collection program with additional food waste dedicated trucks and carts for residential customers and empowers residents and businesses to take personal action against climate change.

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De-packaging system separates food from plastic packaging for resource recovery.



Commercially packaged produce being loaded into hopper for separation at the Johnson Canyon Landfill in Gonzales; organic matter will serve as feedstock for clean energy production and composting.

**More about Salinas Valley Recycles:** The Salinas Valley Solid Waste Authority, a.k.a. Salinas Valley Recycles (SVR), is a joint powers agency made up of the following local governments: Monterey County (eastern half of the unincorporated county), and the cities of Gonzales, Greenfield, King City, Salinas, and Soledad.

SVR is responsible for providing secure long-term resource recovery services and solid waste disposal to all of its members in an environmentally sound and cost-effective manner. To accomplish this goal, SVR currently owns and manages three closed and one active landfill and two transfer stations, and oversees the operation of these facilities that serve its 265,000 citizens and 2,400 square mile service territory. SVR is also responsible for overseeing future expansion of waste and recycling programs and infrastructure and landfill services to meet the area's long-term solid waste disposal needs.

**CalRecycle's Organics Grant Program:** The program, funded by the California Climate Investments Cap and Trade proceeds, was developed to reduce statewide GHG emissions by

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expanding existing capacity or establishing new composting and anaerobic digestion facilities in California that will reduce the amount of organic materials sent to landfills. This grant program supports the State's GHG emissions reduction goals, and 75% diversion goal by 2020. For the FY 2016-17 competitive grant funding cycle, CalRecycle allocated \$24 million for composting and anaerobic digestions projects and received 35 eligible grant applications, totaling over \$88 million in funding requests. SVR's application was one of ten applications selected for funding, receiving a total of \$1.34 million of the available grant funds.

The Grant project supports SVR's Mission, Vision and Values by providing sustainable and cost-effective community-based waste reduction programs. It also supports SVR's Strategic Plan Goal to Select and Implement Facilities and Programs that Lead to Achievement of at Least 75% Waste Diversion. The grant funding is directly helping expand the organics recovery program in the Salinas Valley to divert food and packaged agricultural produce from the landfill.