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# Sumter County Public Works

January 9, 2001

Ron Henricks  
Florida Department of Environmental Protection  
Bureau of Solid and Hazardous Waste  
2600 Blair Stone Road MS#4570  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-2400

**Re:** Comments on Proposed Food Recovery and Recycling Project

Dear Ron:

Sumter County has participated in the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) Innovative Recycling Grant program since its inception and continues to appreciate the opportunity to participate. I was impressed with the quality of this year's proposed projects, which I think is a testament to the program in promoting innovative resource recovery in Florida. I am writing to express my concern, however, regarding the pre-proposal submitted by Sarasota County, titled *Food Recovery and Recycling Project*, and to describe the reasons for my concern.

I am aware of the correspondence to you from Dr. Wayne Smith of the University of Florida and co-director of the Florida Organics Recycling Center for Excellence (FORCE) regarding his concerns about this project. The recovery and distribution of food is very worthwhile but I agree with Dr. Smith that the organizational infrastructure for this type of recovery program already exists in Florida and is spearheaded by organizations such as religious institutions and non-profit groups like Second Harvest Food Banks. Dr. Smith's opinion of the "food for animals" component certainly merits consideration due to his extensive experience with and knowledge of similar programs.

My concern is that the proposed Sarasota project contains significant components that replicate specific areas of technology testing, marketing, feedstock testing and educational outreach already included in the FORCE project. In addition, one component of the proposed project replicates the efforts of Sumter County's recently completed food waste vermicomposting project previously funded by DEP's Innovative Recycling Grant program. This pilot testing technology will be enhanced through the FORCE scope of work

The FORCE project will begin the first stages of implementation in early 2001. As you know, the FORCE project is being funded through a legislative appropriation, and by funding this project, the Legislature and Governor's office clearly intended to establish the means necessary to develop Florida's organics recycling infrastructure and to support it through coordinated research and development of processing technologies as well as marketing tested and certified organic products. In other words, the FORCE project was created to centralize the effort to streamline organic processing, marketing, education, research and testing in Florida.

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Garry Breeden, Director  
Tommy Hurst, Assistant Director

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Mr. Ron Henricks  
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It appears that the organics portion of the Sarasota County pre-proposal would create a conflict with the legislative intent to centralize and standardize organic research and education. RecycleFlorida Today's (RFT) organics division is closely involved with the FORCE project. FORCE's Technical Advisory Group includes representatives from FORA/RFT as well as Florida's agricultural and farming industry. All of these entities are supportive of a process to establish a centralized and state-approved organics educational program for its members through FORCE because they understand and agree with the Legislature's intent. As a part of the FORCE project, UF/IFAS is planning to conduct an extensive education, training, and outreach program both on- and off-site that will include publications, videos, electronic documents, and hands-on training programs with a statewide impact through the FORCE project.

In my opinion, the proposed Sarasota compost project would also continue to encounter those same obstacles which have historically been problematic for the existing organic processes in Florida and are the very issues which the FORCE project has been charged to address (e.g., market development, technological evaluation, material testing and product consistency).

I'm concerned that the proposed budget request of the Innovative Grant project exceeds 15 percent of the FORCE project's 5-year budget. This overlap of the state's current funding efforts would be particularly expensive in light of the shorter duration of the Innovative Grant funding period and contradicts the Legislature's intent to not fund parallel projects. As public sector servants, it's important to perform proper organic testing and research through one venue thereby eliminating the duplication of projects funded by the Legislature. The Governor and Legislature created FORCE as a hospitable venue for funding centralized organics composting research and testing through a legislative appropriation with the intent of accomplishing efficient and effective use of tax dollars.

It's my opinion that the Department should carefully consider the innovative characteristics of the proposed food recovery and recycling project. Some components of the proposed Sarasota project appear to have merit while others clearly duplicate existing projects for which the legislature has already appropriated funding. The Governor's office and the Legislature intended for FORCE to eliminate the "shot-gun" approach to research and centralize organics testing and research into one center. It's important that the State of Florida standardize processes for producing a consistent organics product through a managed application and education program. The Legislature's approval of the creation of the Florida Organics Recycling Center for Excellence demonstrates their commitment to that goal and I hope that the department shares this same commitment.

I appreciate you considering my concerns and certainly will be willing to discuss them further. Please feel free to contact me anytime.

Sincerely,



Garry Breeden  
Co-Director  
FORCE

cc: Wayne Smith, Co-Director, FORCE  
Jennifer Caldwell-Kurka, DEP  
Sumter County Legislative Delegation