SANBORN HEAD

Windham Solid Waste Management District Receives ACEC-Vermont Engineering Excellence Award for Composting Facility Expansion

BY: TIM PETIT, PE ON OCTOBER 26, 2026

Sanborn, Head & Associates, Inc. (Sanborn Head) is pleased to announce that the Windham Solid Waste Management District (WSWMD) Composting Facility Expansion project has been recognized with a Merit Award at the 2026 American Council of Engineering Companies of Vermont (ACEC/VT) Engineering Excellence Awards. The awards ceremony was held on June 4, 2026 at the Champlain College Conference & Event Center in Burlington, Vermont.

Michelle Cherrier, Chair of the WSWMD Board of Supervisors, accepted the award on behalf of WSWMD. “I am proud of the fact that our staff, in conjunction with Sanborn Head and Agrilab Technologies, were able to implement a project that provides significant capacity to recycle the region’s food waste, and manufacture compost that is used in a wide range of applications,” she said.

The Engineering Excellence Awards program recognizes outstanding engineering achievements that demonstrate innovation, technical complexity, and meaningful benefit to communities across Vermont. This year’s Merit Award acknowledges the collaborative effort of WSWMD, Agrilab Technologies, and Sanborn Head in delivering a transformative upgrade to the district’s composting facility located at 327 Old Ferry Road in Brattleboro, Vermont.

The WSWMD Composting Facility Expansion represents a significant advancement in municipal organics processing for the Windham region of Vermont. At its core, the project delivered a modern, high-performance composting facility built around Agrilab Technologies’ Compost Aeration and Heat Recovery (CAHR) technology, a process intensification system that uses forced aeration and heat recovery to accelerate composting times, improve finished product quality, and strengthen environmental controls for odor and runoff management.

The expanded facility is housed within a new purpose-built building engineered to withstand heavy equipment traffic and compost pile loads, with integrated aeration pipes that are central to the CAHR process. The result is a facility with substantially greater capacity to process organic materials from across the district, reducing the volume of waste directed to landfill and advancing Vermont’s broader organics diversion goals.

“The team at Agrilab Technologies Inc. is extremely grateful and proud to have been a part of this project at the Brattleboro WSWMD” said Brian Jerose, President and co-founder of Agrilab Technologies Inc. “The organics challenge is scale, logistics and odor. Brattleboro shows that a large problem can have a simple, elegant answer. Our modular compost aeration, heat recovery and biofilter systems are designed to be replicated, and we believe this site can serve as a model for decentralized public-private composting that New England and the rest of the country needs next.”

From an environmental standpoint, the project addressed a complex stormwater management challenge: separating clean stormwater from process runoff across an expanded composting footprint. The solution consolidated three previously separate operational stormwater permits into a single, cohesive system, incorporating a new stormwater infiltration basin that meets current Vermont design and treatment standards. These improvements deliver meaningful, long-term environmental protection for the surrounding area.

The project was completed as a cost-effective solution for a municipal client, achieving its operational and environmental objectives without incurring long-term debt for the district. The collaboration among WSWMD, Agrilab Technologies, and Sanborn Head produced a facility that serves residential, commercial and institutional food waste generators of the Windham region with a more efficient, and cost-effective approach

to composting.

Several hauling companies have established new organic collection programs, generating revenue from rental of containers and collection services.

Another regional benefit of the compost facility is production of “Brattlegrow Compost” which is marketed by garden centers and landscape contractors. WSWMD donates compost to schools for use in their gardens and landscaping. Some schools incorporate the recycling of food scraps into their curriculum and bring students to tour the compost facility.

The result is a facility that significantly expands WSWMD’s capacity to process organic materials, reduces landfill waste, and supports regional environmental objectives, all while delivering a cost-effective solution for the district and the communities it serves.

“This recognition reflects the strength of the partnership between WSWMD, Agrilab Technologies, and our team at Sanborn Head,” said Tim Petit, Senior Project Manager at Sanborn Head. “We are proud to have contributed our permitting, stormwater, and civil engineering expertise to a project that delivers real, lasting benefits for the Brattleboro community and Vermont’s broader sustainability goals.”

The ACEC/VT Engineering Excellence Awards evaluate entries across five criteria: uniqueness and innovative application of techniques, future value to the engineering profession and public awareness, social and sustainable development considerations, project complexity, and successful fulfillment of client needs. The WSWMD Composting Facility Expansion was recognized for its innovative integration of advanced composting technology with complex civil and geotechnical engineering, its contribution to Vermont’s organics diversion goals, and its successful delivery for a municipal client.