



Community Grant Success Story

Akron Zoo

Background

The Akron Zoo, which hosts more than 400,000 visitors a year, is located in Summit County in northeast Ohio. The zoo occupies more than 30 developed acres of land and is home to more than 700 animals. Conservation has historically been an important value to the Akron Zoo and they wanted to be an example to their community not only through their animal conservation efforts but also through the sustainable management of the zoo's day-to-day operations.

Challenge

Since 2011, the Akron Zoo has diverted more than 3.6 million pounds of organic waste from the landfill. Previously, the zoo had been using an outside vendor who would collect their organic waste and take it to a composting facility. After experiencing changes with their initial organic hauler and increasing limitations on acceptable organic material, Akron Zoo decided to look for alternative solutions for their organic waste to help them reach their long-term goal of being a zero-waste organization. After evaluating their options, the Akron Zoo decided that the Big Hanna in-vessel composting unit was best suited for their needs.

Outcome

The community development grant from Ohio EPA's Recycling and Litter Prevention Program (R&LP), along with match funds from Akron Zoo, were used to pay for the T480 Big Hanna unit and other necessary equipment. Installation of the Big Hanna unit will allow the zoo to compost 20,000 pounds of organic waste annually, including typically difficult items to compost like vegetable flatware and animal waste. The Big Hanna and the building that encloses it serves as a model and educational opportunity for the zoo and its visitors to learn about sustainability. The zoo has hosted more than 200 tours of the facility, including institutions like Akron Public Schools, Kent State University and Goodyear. Akron Zoo has collaborated with other organizations such as the University of Akron by utilizing some of their organic waste.

Resources

Through the R&LP community and litter grant, Ohio EPA offers grants to local governments of up to \$200,000 per applicant for the collection and processing of recyclables. Communities and non-profits can also receive funding to implement litter collection events and tire amnesty programs. A 25 percent match from the applicant is required and the grant period is 12 months.

For more information about Ohio EPA's community and litter grant, visit epa.ohio.gov/ocapp/Grants or contact Dave Foulkes at (614) 644-3118.



Photo credit: Phil Masturzo/Akron Beacon Journal

Project Specifics

Location

Akron Zoo
500 Edgewood Avenue
Akron, Ohio 44307

Details

Akron Zoo installed an in-vessel composting system to significantly reduce the amount of organic waste being sent to the landfill and achieve their sustainability goals.

Cost

\$248,528 (\$86,528 from Akron Zoo and \$162,000 from Ohio EPA's community development grant).

Environmental Impacts

20,000 pounds of organic waste diverted from the landfill annually.

Education/Outreach Impacts

Institutions in the zoological field, as well as local businesses, have contacted the Akron Zoo to learn more about the Big Hanna.