

**Compostable Film...  
or how I learned to love  
dirt and take away your  
right to use plastic bags**

Rep. Paul Gardner  
MN House of Representatives  
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- Haulers pay higher tip fees to get rid of yard waste in plastic bags
- Finished compost is worth less with plastic fragments in it
- End users of compost want a steady and predictable supply

**When It Comes to Yard Waste...**



**EARTH FRIENDLY AND VALUABLE**

COMPOST OPERATOR RECEIVES  
LARGER PROFIT, AT LOWER COSTS  
TO CUSTOMERS.



COMPOSTABLE PLASTIC;  
COMPOST

COMPOST  
SITE

PLASTIC MIXED IN  
WITH COMPOST



**LARGELY UNUSABLE. LOW VALUE AND  
ENVIRONMENTALLY UNFRIENDLY.**

COMPOST OPERATOR GETS LOWER PRICE FOR  
FINISHED COMPOST AND SOMETIMES CAN'T SELL IT



YARD WASTE  
(AND FOOD WASTE IN  
SOME CITIES)



RECYCLABLES



TRASH



RECYCLING  
CENTER



- Successful economic development for industry results in “clusters”
- Examples: flour milling, mining, medical devices, supercomputers, etc. with robust local group of suppliers, talent
- Economic development usually includes tax credits, grants, investment in higher education
- But we got no money

**Boost for Biopolymers...**

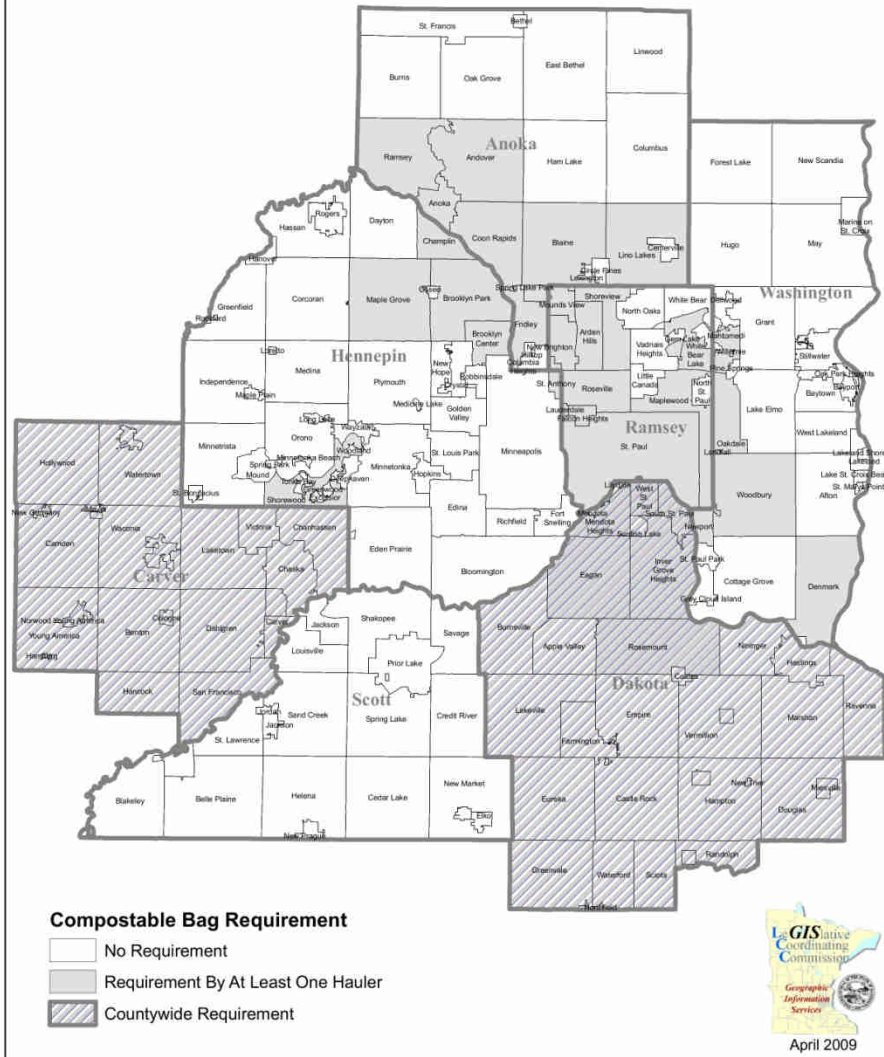
- Another way to promote is by setting rules
- Example: renewable energy standard and conservation & efficiency legislation leading to investment in turbines, windows, etc.
- Focusing on compostable bags for yard waste was an intersection of environmentalism, market development, and economic development

**Economic Development**

- HF403/SF383 requires use of a compostable bag in seven-county metro if you use a plastic bag starting 1/1/2010
- The new law creates consistent policy across jurisdictions.
- In a marketplace with a lot of private haulers, the law creates a level playing field for all haulers

**Why state law?**

## Counties and Haulers with Compostable Bag Requirements For Yard Waste



Requirements vary  
across 100+  
municipalities

- All of these are OK
  - **Carts** (or other reusable container)
  - **Kraft paper bags**
  - **Compostable plastic bags**
  - Plastic bags at yard waste drop off (just take bag with you)



**How do residents & haulers comply?**

- Bags labeled “**compostable**”
  - Must meet ASTM D6400 – the Standard Specification for Compostable Plastics
  - Each bag must be labeled to reflect that it meets the ASTM D6400 Standard Specification
- Bags labeled “**biodegradable**”, “**degradable**”, or something similar
  - May **not** label this way until scientific standard is developed to demonstrate that these bags safely decompose in a reasonable short period of time
  - Presently, such standards do not exist

**How do sellers of plastic bags comply?**

- There is broad bi-partisan interest in the legislature for...
  1. alternative energy
  2. alternative waste management technologies
  3. bio-based manufacturing
- Partisan divisions exist as to how government should promote these objectives

## Political Dynamics

- Environment: Compost not on many people's radar screen
- Economics: Bill can cut costs for haulers—how to prove?
- Economic development: MN is a center for biopolymer research and development
- Hometown companies: Three compostable film manufacturers are in MN
- Freedom? Your freedom ends once you dump your problem on somebody else

**So how did THIS thing pass?**