

Calif. pushes to make landfills food-free

By Jeremy B. White, Sacramento Bee

Heather Maloney thinks of herself as an environmentalist but, as a working mother, doesn't have the time to create a backyard compost heap. The little bucket for food waste that Napa's recycling authority sent her offers a more convenient way to keep her leftovers from lining a landfill.

"You're already scraping plates and rinsing them off to put in the dishwasher, so it's a pretty easy system," Maloney said, standing in her kitchen. "It's definitely cut down on our trash."

Barbara Barstad is less enthusiastic. She gave up after being repulsed by the bugs and odor, two of the top three reasons Napa residents offered for declining to participate (the third came from people accustomed to putting food scraps in the garbage disposal).

"It just made a big mess," said Barstad, 76.

Those reactions can be expected to echo across California. Napa County, and a few select jurisdictions such as San Francisco, are incubating a policy that will take hold statewide in the next decade.

In a little-heralded move with potentially sweeping implications, the California Air Resources Board last month announced a push to halt disposal of nearly all organic waste by 2025. The shift would likely require building new processing facilities, prod cities and counties to develop ways to collect it, and add an extra trash-sorting step before Californians drag bins to the curb.

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