

Story Title Recycling Agricultural Plastic Project Baled Plastic Collection

Program Franklin - Ag & Natural Resources-Sustainable Energy

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**Is this related to an
Equal
Program/Employment
Opportunity?** Yes

Executive Summary Plastic film has proven to be a cost-effective, expedient alternative to older, more traditional forage storage systems, for farmers with short term forage stockpiling and storage requirements.

**Issues/Needs and
Audiences** Since plastic film used to store forage has no secondary on-farm use and, since very little is being recycled because, among other things,

- it is cumbersome to handle
- rarely meets the specifications of plastics recycling markets
- landfill tipping fees can quickly add up and
- some municipal landfills won't accept them
- substantial quantities of low density polyethylene (LDPE) agricultural plastic film are
 - o left behind in the fields to litter the ground, all too frequently ending up in rivers, lakes and streams
 - o burned in open fires, generating dioxins and other pollutants in places where toxic fumes and particulates can be inhaled by humans and animals and where contaminants can be deposited on soil and in groundwater, and on food and forage crops or
 - o buried in landfills or on the farm which, among other things, can contaminate ground water, especially when crop material becomes trapped in the plastic or when larger pieces can trap water, becoming breeding grounds for mosquitoes and disease.

Extension Responses For several years now, Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) of Franklin County, using specially-designed trailer-mounted trash compactors (or plastics 'balers'), has assisted farmers with 'baling' used agricultural plastic on-site at participating farms for shipping to materials recycling facilities (MRF) in New York City and out-of-state; a strategy which proved to be too expensive and therefore, unsustainable. This year, under the guidance of and with funds provided by Cornell University's Waste Management Institute's (CWMI) Recycling Agricultural Plastics Project (RAPP), CCE of Franklin County partnered with TAP Industries, a local MRF interested in promoting greater involvement in North Country recycling programs, to remove agricultural plastics for storage and eventual processing locally, instead of trucking them elsewhere, making the process much more cost-effective, while minimizing handling and environmental impact. TAP Industries will continue to accept used farm plastics dropped off at their MRF sites in Malone and Plattsburgh. Discussion is ongoing regarding TAP Industries picking up another 40 bales of plastic

from farms in the region.

- Accomplishments and Impacts** Franklin County CCE coordinated an effort between TAP Industries and area farmers to remove 121 bales of used agricultural plastics, weighing approximately 60 tons, from farms in Franklin and Clinton Counties, and transport them to a holding facility in Plattsburgh. TAP Industries, which is in the process of upgrading their recycling facility in Malone, plans to eventually process agricultural (and other) plastic into pellets; the feedstock used in the manufacturing of new plastic products.
- Collaborators** Cornell University's Waste Management Institute's (CWMI) Recycling Agricultural Plastics Project (RAPP), TAP Industries, Franklin County Soil & Water
- Special funding sources (if any)** Cornell Waste Management Institute's Recycling Agricultural Plastics Project (RAPP)