

NY POLICY on BURNING AGRICULTURAL PLASTICS

IT IS AGAINST THE LAW TO BURN WASTE PLASTIC IN OPEN FIRES ON FARMS OR ELSEWHERE IN NEW YORK STATE.

Regulations prohibiting open burning of household and agricultural trash went into effect October 2009.

Since then, plastics used in agriculture—e.g., horticultural mulch film, drip tape, dairy bunk silo covers, pesticide containers, packaging, etc.—may not be discarded by burning in barrels or open fires.

Farmers are still permitted to burn brush and other organic agricultural wastes if the material is generated on-site, can be fully burned within 24 hours, and if the fire is located on at least five acres of agricultural land.

But farmers may not burn construction debris, old fencing, packaging materials, or other trash.

Source: NYS DEC Air Resource Regs, Ch. III, Part 215, www.dec.ny.gov/regs/4261.html;
Factsheet: www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/58519.html



Why?

Trash fires are the primary cause of wildfires. They generate harmful emissions: highly toxic dioxins and particulates that lodge in the lungs. The “open burning” regulations protect health, the food supply, and air quality.

Questions:

The NYS Department of Environmental Conservation Factsheet details the open burning regulations (www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/58519.html).

Report violations with a call to the 24-hour TIPP hotline (1-800-TIPP DEC), email to the TIPP Dispatcher <r5dsptch@gw.dec.state.ny.us>, or by contacting a DEC Environmental Conservation Officer (ECO).

Find your local EOC by calling the DEC Dispatch Center at 1-877-457-5680 or linking to local EOC contact information on the DEC website: www.dec.ny.gov/about/621.html.

Recycling Agricultural Plastics Project (RAPP) - Cornell, Ithaca NY 14853

RAPP

RECYCLING AGRICULTURAL PLASTICS PROJECT

Update for NYS Recycling Community

Large amounts of plastics are used these days to grow, process, and store agricultural crops. Most of it is discarded after one use. Very little is being recycled, in part because used agricultural plastics are often cumbersome to handle and rarely meet the specifications of plastics recycling markets. Few plastics processors are set up to handle them.

The Recycling Agricultural Plastics Project—a Cornell University program promoting sustainable materials management and life-cycle stewardship—is working to change this picture by developing infrastructure, protocols and markets to recycle these difficult materials.

Since 2009, RAPP has coordinated the collection of more than one million pounds of used plastic that would otherwise go into landfills, be burned in open fires on-farms, or get left behind in the fields.

This accomplishment has been made possible by the collaborative efforts of numerous agencies, organizations, businesses, and farmers across NY.

Agricultural plastics recycled from NYS farms are now being made into sidewalk pavers, plastic lumber, oil and other products!

RAPP continues to strive toward our goal of sustainable, efficient and cost-effective recycling accessible to all New York farmers. Partnerships with local recycling agencies and businesses are a key to success!



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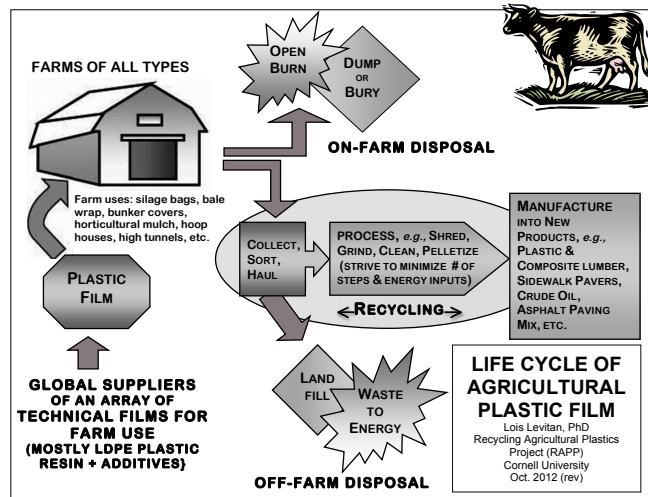
HOW NYS RAPP WORKS

Staff of the NYS Recycling Agricultural Plastics Project (RAPP) work with local partners to recruit participants to the recycling program, train local leaders, and develop individualized “best management plans” for farmers to use in preparing their plastics for recycling.

With about 35,000 farms in NYS and only a few RAPP staff, the program relies on close collaborations with Cornell Cooperative Extension Associations (CCE), Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD), solid waste and recycling agencies and businesses, and others across the State to help spread the recycling message, teach best management protocols, and carry out the collection of plastics.

Thus far, most of the film plastic collected for recycling has been baled—either on individual farms or at centralized collection points—using one of RAPP’s mobile plastics balers. With farm staff loading the baler and RAPP staff or partners operating it, 1000 pounds of film can be compacted into a dense, square, stackable bale in about 30 minutes. With experience and additional training, farm staff are also approved to operate the balers. Finished bales are accumulated locally until container loads are ready to move to market. As the program grows, RAPP anticipates that alternative collection models will proliferate.

RAPP strives to close the loop by recycling old products into new within our geographic region. To help sustain this and other recycling programs, RAPP encourages everyone to **Buy Recycled!**



File: RAPPUpdateRecyclers2013Apr11

Major funding for RAPP is currently from the NYS Environmental Protection Fund administered by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC). Funding has also come from the NY Farm Viability Institute, Cornell Cooperative Extension Administration, US EPA Region II, USDA Rural Development, and Cornell Department of Communication, with invaluable in-kind contributions from RAPP partners.

RAPP and the NYS RECYCLING COMMUNITY

Agricultural plastics present different challenges than curbside recyclables: they are bulky, often wet and dirty, and not wanted by most traditional plastics recycling markets.

RAPP has been chipping away at these challenges by developing and promoting guidelines to keep used plastic cleaner and more compact, acquiring mobile compaction equipment for use on farms and in rural areas, and cultivating markets that are willing and able to handle many of the types of plastic discarded after use on farms.

However, agricultural plastics recycling is still in its infancy, not yet implemented in all of NYS. The infrastructure, know-how and energy of the recycling community could be the critical spark needed for the program to expand, making recycling possible for more NYS farmers.

HOW the RECYCLING COMMUNITY CAN HELP

- Let farmers in your area know that it’s possible to recycle many types of agricultural plastics. → *But it can happen only when plastics are prepared for recycling & local infrastructure is in place!*
- Put interested farmers in touch with RAPP staff (or with one of RAPP’s local partners) to develop an individualized “best management plan” (BMP) for handling plastics for recycling. *BMPs must be followed!*
- Familiarize yourself with RAPP’s BMPs. The basic BMPs are:
 - Keep plastic as clean and dry as possible.
 - Shake out pebbles and clumps of soil.
 - Roll or fold used film plastic into pillow-sized bundles.
 - Store on off the ground, out of mud, gravel and grit.
 - Separate different types of used plastic by color and type.
- Offer your site and equipment for baling, storing finished bales until enough are collected to market, and assisting in loading bales onto tractor-trailers for efficient transport to markets.
- Contact RAPP staff with your ideas, suggestions and questions, and to express interest in becoming involved. If there isn’t a program in your area and you would like to be involved, please let us know.

RAPP State & Local Contacts

LOCAL CONTACT:

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