



**Camp Treetops
North Country School**

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Composters Turn Waste into Valuable Resource

Large-scale composting systems installed in three North Country communities

SARANAC LAKE, N.Y. — Local communities can now turn food waste into rich organic material using locally designed and manufactured composting systems. Three large-scale composters were installed this summer at Lake Placid Central School, Hermon Dekalb Central School and The Wild Center.

A model composter that was built at North Country School Camp Treetops (NCS/CTT) in 2017 has been replicated at the three institutions, allowing schools and communities to process up to 200 pounds of organic matter each day, turning waste into compost in about a month's time.

"Composting with this in-vessel system allows organizations, municipalities or businesses to save money by reducing landfill costs, reducing methane emissions, creating a valuable soil amendment and reducing water pollution that can occur with open-air composting piles," said John Culpepper, NCS/CTT Director of Facilities and Sustainability. "The shortened retention time and mechanized rotation make large-scale composting much more streamlined."

The 2017 pilot project was funded through the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority's (NYSERDA) Cleaner Greener Communities program, a four-year \$100 million initiative aimed at moving New York communities toward a more environmentally sustainable future. The program encourages communities to create public-private partnerships and develop regional sustainable growth strategies in areas such as emission control, energy efficiency, renewable energy, low-carbon transportation and other carbon reductions. The Adirondack North Country Association (ANCA) secured NYSERDA funding for the systems and worked closely with NCS/CTT and site hosts to ensure the project met its goals and requirements.

"Today's announcement is an excellent example of the impact local communities can have by coming together in an effort to advance sustainability and environmental stewardship," said Alicia Barton, President and CEO of NYSERDA. "Public-private partnerships are a cornerstone of Governor Cuomo's

efforts to eliminate New York's carbon footprint and the leadership and innovation shown with this North Country project has already inspired others to join the state's efforts to reduce emissions and protect our natural resources for future generations."

In two years, NCS/CTT has processed over 116,000 pounds of organic material, composed mostly of food scraps, into 53 cubic yards of high-quality compost that is then used in the school's vegetable gardens.

ANCA secured additional funding from NYSDERDA in the fall of 2018 to construct three more composting units in the region. Culpepper and ANCA Sustainability Project Coordinator Jennifer Perry selected the host organizations based on their proven commitment to sustainability initiatives and their ability to successfully complete projects.

"Lake Placid, Hermon DeKalb and The Wild Center stood out immediately as ideal recipients for the systems," said Perry. "We're excited to have these partners on board, demonstrating how the composters work and how they can benefit communities across the North Country."

The systems are housed in retrofitted 40-foot shipping containers, which were purchased in part with funds from the New York State Association for Reduction, Reuse & Recycling (NYSAR³) Green Schools Grant Program.

The Wild Center is partnering with the Tupper Lake School District to educate the public about composting processes and benefits. Tupper Lake School and The Wild Center will provide food scraps and integrate the composter into its "New Path Tour" which highlights the Center's sustainability initiatives.

"We are so excited about the opportunity to share this food waste reduction and education project with the thousands of visitors who come to the Wild Center every year," said Jen Kretser, Director of Climate Initiatives. "In addition to our Youth Climate Program, solar panels, living roof and LEED silver certified building, this project reinforces our mission of co-existing with nature through a commitment to a sustainable, solutions-focused future."

Lake Placid High School Environmental Club students first learned about North Country's drum composter by attending the Wild Center's Adirondack Youth Climate Summit and have been processing school food waste at North Country's facility for two years. They are now creating a student-run business model for collecting organic material from community members, operating their own composter and distributing the end product. The community composting business encourages students to learn about sustainability and environmental science and develop valuable business and life skills.

Hermon DeKalb Central School will include the composter in their local food program. Perry said the school's composting system will be supported by several committed community members including an Amish farm, a local restaurant and the State University of New York (SUNY) in Canton.

Inspired by a growing interest among institutions, Greg LeClair, who partnered with Culpepper on the original design, has started a small business in Upper Jay that manufactures the composting machines.

“Working with North Country School has been a fantastic experience. John told me what they needed the machine to do, and my team and I designed a system to meet those needs,” LeClair said. “I love this project. If I could build these full time, I would.”

The estimated cost of one composting machine is around \$30,000, plus \$10,000 for the shipping container. Culpepper estimates the system pays for itself in five to eight years due to cost savings from tipping fees and the value of finished compost. The composters offset about nine metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions annually — the equivalent of removing two vehicles from the road.

Culpepper said he receives requests for information on a daily basis. “We envision spreading this technology around the world,” said Culpepper, “One composter at a time.”

For more information about the composter project and how your community can implement a composting plan, contact ANCA Sustainability Project Coordinator Jennifer Perry at jperry@adirondack.org or (518) 891-6200 or John Culpepper NCS/CTT Director of Facilities and Sustainability jculpepper@northcountryschool.org or (518) 523-9329.

[ANCA](#) is an independent nonprofit organization growing the New Economy in northern New York. Using an integrated approach to sustainable economic development and prosperity where economic health, community vitality and ecological stewardship are equally important outcomes, ANCA focuses on creating opportunity for people with diverse backgrounds, experience and education levels.

[North Country School / Camp Treetops](#) sit on a 220-acre campus amongst majestic mountain peaks in New York State’s Adirondack Park. Since 1921 and 1938 respectively, the camp and school have been nationally renowned for pioneering educational programs rooted in progressive practices and experiential learning. NCS and Treetops guide children to engage the natural world, take on intellectual and physical challenges in a nurturing community, and cultivate independence and creativity. An extension of NCS-Treetops, [RockE House & BaseCamp](#), created in 2015, offers experiential learning and outdoor adventures for children and adults.

[NYSERDA](#), a public benefit corporation, offers objective information and analysis, innovative programs, technical expertise, and funding to help New Yorkers increase energy efficiency, save money, use renewable energy, and reduce reliance on fossil fuels. NYSERDA professionals work to protect the environment and create clean-energy jobs. NYSERDA has been developing partnerships to advance innovative energy solutions in New York State since 1975.

Attached: One (1) PDF document and one (1) photo

Photo courtesy of ANCA: John Culpepper, Director of Facilities and Sustainability, operates a large-scale drum composter at North Country School Camp Treetops in Lake Placid, NY in Spring 2017. ###