



# CASE STUDY

## Zero Waste Pilot Compost Program Achieves Big 10 Results

Purdue University, Purdue Athletics, Purdue Sports Properties, and the Office of University Sustainability team up and prove waste diversion is successful with fan engagement.



### OVERVIEW

Purdue University and partners wanted to pilot a zero waste compost program as proof of concept in an athletic venue. Specifically, the program involved working in the Ross-Ade Stadium South End Zone Patio area throughout the 2014 Purdue Boilermakers football season. The patio is a new venue for 1,500 season ticket holders and VIP card members. Those who have a pass are allowed to 'tailgate' within the patio area during the game. The patio area serves guests snacks and alcohol; this venue is the second to serve alcohol to the general public in the Big Ten.

### OBJECTIVE

The objective of the pilot program was to learn by doing with the goal of providing proof-of-concept that zero waste (greater than 90% diversion rate) was possible and manageable within the athletics setting. This waste included cold cups, lids, food trays, and any other compostable and recyclable items served in the South End Zone Patio area. The concept for the pilot was based on the success of Purdue's **Black & Gold & Green Tailgate Team recycling program** launched in 2012, which increased tailgate recycling rates from 6.5% (2012) to 44.6% (2013).

### STRATEGY

The goal of zero waste was accomplished through three strategies that were each vital to project success:

#### Products / Purchasing

##### NO SINGLE COMPANY HAD ALL OF THE SOLUTIONS

First, the pilot focused on the food serviceware and purchasing aspects of the concession operation. Purdue Sports Properties leveraged their strategic relationship with Levy Restaurants (the concessionaire) to facilitate the review of the standard product line with the goal of screening for compostability and recyclability. NatureWorks, world leading biopolymers supplier and innovator of Ingeo™ naturally advanced materials, coordinated select supply chain partners:

- **Eco-Products** - provided compostable GreenStripe® cold cups and hot cups (Ingeo-based), paper food trays and cutlery.
- **Heritage Bag Co.** - provided compostable waste station liners made from Ingeo-based film.

#### Infrastructure

##### CONDUCTIVE TO THE PILOT PROGRAM

Second, the project had to create an infrastructure that was effective and worked within Purdue's existing operational framework. Dual-compartment waste stations were labeled as "Mixed Recyclables" and "Compost." Signage was developed for



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continued

“ The South End Zone Zero Waste Pilot provided proof-of-concept that zero waste in one of our athletics venues is achievable. NatureWorks helped us close the compostable food serviceware and organics recycling loop at this scale as supply chain coordinator.”

— Michael Gulich, AIA LEED, Director of University Sustainability, Purdue University



the waste stations which included pictures of the actual compostable items for clarity. Purdue Athletics Facilities managed the solid waste logistics. And the team worked with GreenCycle of Indiana as a permitted compost facility on environmental issues. On-site sorting after each game identified and quantified contamination.

## Ambassadors, education, and fan engagement

### ALWAYS SOMETHING TO LEARN

To close the knowledge gap – not everyone understands the difference between recyclable and compostable – the program utilized ambassadors/instructors to steer fans in the right direction. Members of Purdue University’s Engineers for Sustainability volunteered and took on the role of ambassadors. Ambassadors’ engaged fans alerting them to what went where. They also explained the difference between recyclable and compostable materials. Ambassadors were outfitted in easily recognizable t-shirts. And, there were plenty of signs alerting fans to the program.



## RESULTS

Incremental changes were made from game-to-game which improved overall performance with a “learning by doing” attitude. The goal of achieving zero waste by the final home game of the 2014 football season was achieved with a 98.2% diversion rate, and the pilot program’s success was first presented at the Green Sports Alliance Summit in 2015.

RESULTS: GAME #7		
Road to Zero		
STREAM	#OF BAGS	WEIGHT (lb)
Recycling	10	80.8
Compost	24	143.4
Landfill	1	4.0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>228.2</b>
<b>Diversion Rate = 98.2%</b>		



## KEY STAKEHOLDERS

Partners that made the pilot project possible:

- Office of University Sustainability
- Purdue Athletics
- Purdue Sports Properties (a Learfield Sports affiliate)
- NatureWorks
- Eco-Products
- Heritage Bag Co.
- GreenCycle of Indiana Composting
- Engineers for a Sustainable World
- Levy Restaurants

## CONTACT

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