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## Turning compost into gold

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In pursuit of Net Zero Waste by 2020, Joint Base Lewis-McChord makes the most of organic waste on base. It is recycled to make a high quality compost on the site of a closed landfill on Lewis North. This cost effective method of treating organic waste diverts waste from landfills and creates a useful product for the community.

It all adds up to a great use of vital resources.

At Earthworks, the material from all over JBLM rolls across the scales to weigh in and out. Trucks bring yard waste — limbs and leaves to be roto-chopped into wood chips; 985 tons of food waste is collected from all dining facilities, the JBLM commissaries and restaurants and delivered eight times a week; and manure comes from both JBLM horse stables twice a month.

The organic material is deposited on a mixing floor and mixed with a front end loader. The compost facility is in the old transfer building, it has a roof to protect from rain and one side of the building is open.

It has three large bays made of concrete blocks built with aeration pipes running lengthwise beneath the pile used to build new piles of compost. The current system is an aerated static pile system that uses blower fans to provide the aeration.

Temperatures are regulated using electronic probes that provide real-time data to a monitor in the scale house. It allows the environmental scientist on site to comply with time and temperature permit requirements. It is a simple, low cost and low maintenance system.

Compost made at JBLM goes back to the base in a variety of ways. It is used in troop projects — like area beautification, in community gardens, to enhance pride areas and for restoring grassy areas disturbed by construction activities. It is used to grow prairie plants at Center for Natural Lands Management that are replanted on JBLM to restore prairie areas damaged in training exercises and support endangered species.

By using compost made from materials where the host plants live, the small plant starts have an edge for survival when replanted on the prairie. Eagle's Pride Golf Course, on Lewis Main, is working with Washington State University on a soil study, examining how compost mixed with sand does on golfing greens and uses JBLM compost as a soil amendment on their fairways.

Compost generation at Earthworks is so prolific that earlier this year, 2,000 cubic yards were sold via government auction to the public.

“(The purchaser) was so happy with compost they have received they are interested in bidding on future sales of JBLM compost,” said Aislin Gallagher of the JBLM Directorate of Public Works, Environmental Division, Solid Waste and Recycling program.

Revenue from the sale goes to support Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation programs as well as recycling and sustainability initiatives.

For more information on bringing yard waste to or receiving compost or mulch from Earthworks, visit [lewis-mcchord.army.mil/publicworks/sites/services/dumpsters.aspx](http://lewis-mcchord.army.mil/publicworks/sites/services/dumpsters.aspx).

**Recycling tips for home**  
 Yard waste, to include old mulch, leaves and branches cannot be placed in dumpsters. If found, the contracted garbage service will not haul the dumpster until these items are removed.  
 Instead, service members can bring yard waste from their unit areas directly to Earthworks for disposal.

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