



Update: dog waste composting at Marsha P. Johnson State Park Dog Park

Enviro Pet Waste Network Talks in Ten - March 22, 2023

Host: Ryan Torres, V.P. of Parks Operations., Battery Park City Authority, New York USA

Guest: Devin Gorsen, MPJ State Park Manager, Brooklyn, New York USA

ONLINE VIEWER QUESTIONS

- Q: Is there a regulation regarding staff lifting the bins? Health and safety concerns above and beyond expectations of regular park duties?
- A: Unsure about weight capacity expectations. Bins are emptied on a regular basis and never weigh more than 20 lb. at the heaviest. Weight has never been an issue.
- Q: Between 5-10 lb. of waste is collected every day. What happens to waste that misses composting cycle?
- A: There are marked trash cans around the dog park and visitors can use their own bags and throw away the waste.
- Q: Sounds like you don't monitor temperatures but use a longer wait time instead. Is that accurate? Does that pose regulatory hurdles?
- A: We do monitor and record the temperatures. There has been no regulatory issue. Since we are testing the compost. If we got a bad result we would not use that pile. We often do hit the temperatures, but sometimes the weather prevents us from maintaining the temperatures that we want.
- Q: About the quality of the compost - has there been no adverse batch so far? Our company collects dog waste. Our partners have said that when there is a certain amount of contamination (usually a parasite flagged by animal services), the material can't be diverted to compost. Is that a factor for you?
- A: Good thing to consider! We're not collecting from any outside entities so that's not information that would come from the neighborhood. We've had no problems with test results.
- Q: Sounds like you have a dedicated staff. Are they the same people who you've had from the beginning? Do you have a challenge finding staff?
- A: We've had a couple of people who have been here long term. The nature of these jobs is that people transfer parks and move through positions. We have had a lot of different people involved in the program. Involvement in the process itself is minimal. The actual composting only happens annually.
- Q: What is the protocol for the number of days reaching the temperatures to meet standards?
- A: The baseline that we follow is that the waste needs to reach 130 degrees F for at least three consecutive days but for us it's variable. We make sure that the compost is tested and safe for applications.



The Marsha P. Johnson State Park Dog Park began its composting pilot program in 2016 and is now a permanent feature.

Park staff process 2,000 lb. (one ton) of waste per year on an annual basis.

Finished compost is tested – sometimes multiple times – to make sure it's safe for application on park plantings that are not accessible to the public.

DETAILS ABOUT PARK COMPOSTING

1. Dog waste is stored in the Nitrogen Bin and mixed 50/50 with donated wood chips stored in the Carbon Bin. Paper bags provided for pick up are also a source of carbon for the process.
2. Mixed waste and chips are turned in the Cooking Bin until the material naturally heats up to the prescribed temperature, maintains heat and cools down. At this point it resembles and has the fragrance of crumbly, nutrient-rich compost.
3. The material is cured for a year ensuring that it's mild enough for plant roots and ready to nourish park landscaping.
4. The staff screens pea gravel from the dog park out of the compost, the most difficult part of the process.



Composting is one of the many things the park staff does. It's mainly passive, not a focus. The composting itself is done only once a year. – Devin Gorsen

Marsha P. Johnson State Park, 90 Kent Ave,
Brooklyn, NY 11249, formerly the
Williamsburg East River State Park

*Video: testing the feasibility of on-site dog
waste composting using scoopers and
cedar bins – July 2016*

<https://www.fox5ny.com/news/dog-poop-composting-at-park-in-brooklyn>