EarthKeepers
Bloomington Compost

2022 Benefit Report

About Earthkeepers

We are a woman-owned, minority-owned benefit corporation and a passionate crusader in recovering food waste and composting in Bloomington and Monroe County since 2018.

Our operations prioritize sustainability and a strong community. We build relationships, form partnerships, and educate to help more organizations and households prioritize reducing their organic food waste and divert the rest from landfills. We also provide green, living-wage jobs to our dedicated crew who are essential to Earthkeepers' commercial, institutional, and community food waste collection services. This allows us to produce a high quality, lab-tested compost produced on our Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM)-registered farm that farmers, landscapers, and gardeners alike use to grow nutrient-rich local food, support erosion control and stormwater management, and foster environmental bioremediation.

In this report, we will share more about how Earthkeepers has benefitted our community over the 2020-2022 reporting period.

Earthkeepers' Core Operations

Community Stakeholder Relationships and Education

Food Waste Collection from Institutions, Businesses, and Homes

Earthkeepers' Mission

Compost Processing on Our IDEM-registered Farm

Compost Delivery to Farms, Gardens, Landscapers, and more!

Our Mission

Earthkeepers is a community leader, educating Bloomington and Monroe County on how reducing and diverting food waste to create nutrient-rich compost is part of building a more sustainable future. We raise awareness, participation, and collaboration among local organizations, businesses, and residents to help more of our community benefit by using our range of food waste collection services while reducing organic waste in landfills.

In the Wisdom of Nature, nothing is ever wasted, and nothing is thrown away: the loop, though wide, is always closed and self-contained, as one season's leftovers become the next season's source of new life. – Ryan Conway, Chief Operations Officer

Closing the Loop on Food Waste

Landfills are the nation's third greatest source of methane and account for 20% of all CO_2 and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.[i] And Indiana has fewer than 5 full-scale facilities accepting food waste, according to a recent Biocycle survey.[ii] Like most of America, about 40% of Bloomington and Monroe County's mixed waste comes from food waste and compostables.[iii] This is the largest category of landfilled waste, accounting for 45,000 tons of organic and compostable material a year in Monroe County alone.

By creating new waste streams that divert this waste for composting we can prevent around 30,000 tons of CO_2 landfill emissions a year. According to the EPA, this is the same as the average CO_2 and GHG emissions created by powering 3556 homes or 6053 vehicles annually![iv]

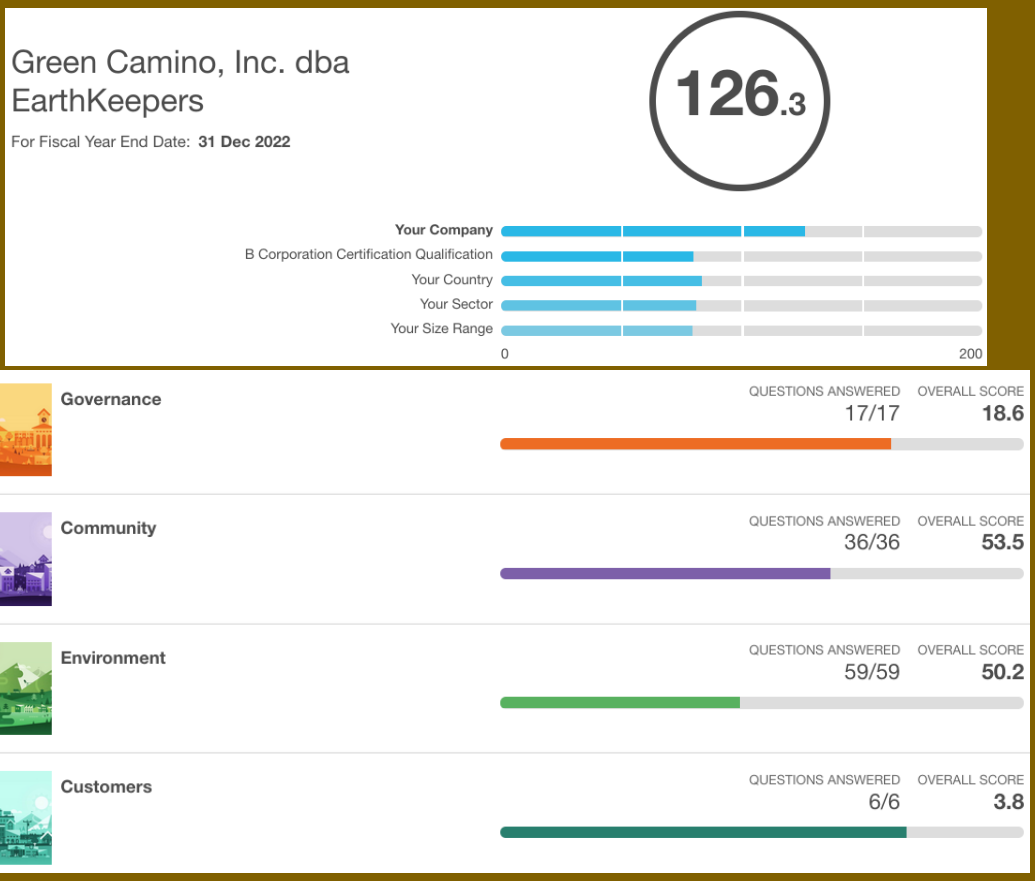
Partnerships, education, and community outreach are essential to keeping more of our food waste and compostables from landfills. Each bucket and roller bin full of scraps Earthkeepers collects is hot composted using the highest industry standards and scientific quality control measures. We then return this rich compost to the earth to support healthier more sustainable food, water, soil, stormwater, and climate systems.

B Impact Assessment™

Third Party Standard

As a benefit corporation in the State of Indiana, Earthkeepers must measure its public benefit against a third-party standard. For this, we have selected B Lab's "B Impact Assessment." B Lab is an internationally recognized non-profit that sets standards and best practices for social and environmental corporate stewardship. Their framework helps Earthkeepers define and set internal standards for excellence. They provide a suite of benchmarks to help assess how our social, environmental, and governance initiatives measure against other businesses with a comparable size and mission. Not only does this help us objectively evaluate our own performance, but it also highlights areas we can improve.

The following scores show B Lab's scores for Earthkeepers' performance in Governance, Community, Environment, and Customers over the fiscal last year compared to our national-level peers in our sector with a similar number of employees.

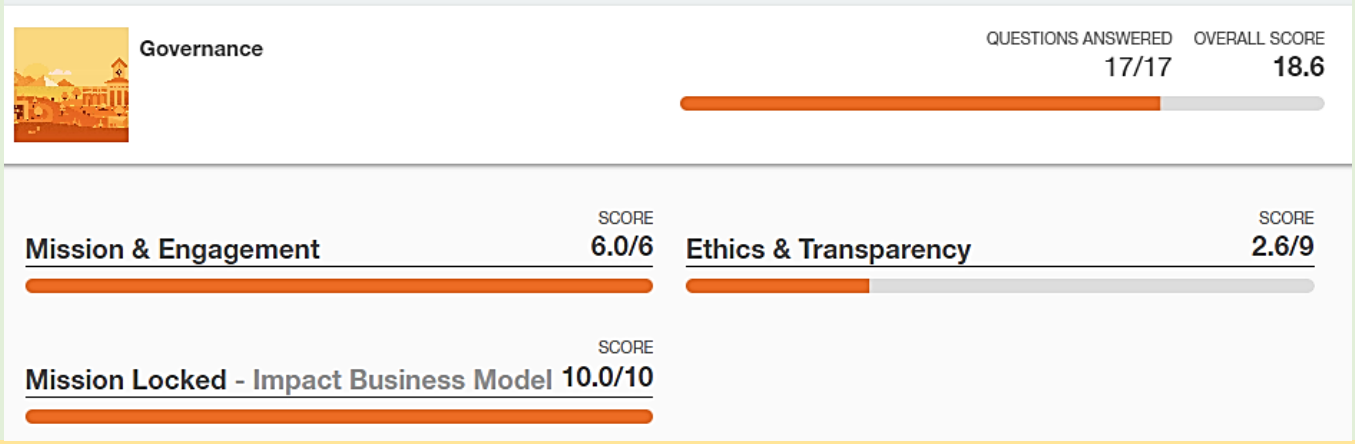


Earthkeepers' Public Benefit

The "B Impact Assessment" defines four areas including Governance, Community, Environment, and Customers that align with Earthkeepers' public benefit.

Governance

Earthkeepers scored **18.6 out of 25** in the ways our mission, ethics & transparency, and accountability affected our social and environmental goals



33 City, County, and Private Partners and Stakeholders

Cook Medical · Monroe County Community School Corporation · Downtown Bloomington, Inc. · Bloomington Chamber of Commerce · Bloomington Economic Development Corporation · Monroe County Soil and Water Conservation District·
Monroe County Solid Waste Management District·
Alpha Delta Pi · City of Bloomington · Monroe County · State of Indiana

Serving All 21 County Schools and 46 Commercial Kitchens

City Eatery Program · Monroe County Community School Corporation

Quarterly Environmental Impact Reports

Mailed or available online for all commercial, residential, and event customers

The Power of Partnerships

Building relationships and creating mutually beneficial partnerships along the way has been key to Earthkeepers approach to collecting more food waste across Bloomington and Monroe County. With over 33 partners across industry and state and local government, we collect scraps from 67 sites including public schools and parks, restaurants, medical campuses, and city offices. We help our partners, stakeholders, and clients meet more of their sustainability goals and in the process keep more waste from producing GHGs in landfills.

Many Bloomingtonians already understand that composting food waste reduces GHG emissions from landfills and hence it is good for the environment. However, composting is also good for our local economy: restaurants can save money by tracking how much food waste they generate and then adjusting their procurement practices to right-size their inventories. Moreover, having a local source of high-quality compost supports local farmers who can grow healthy food at a lower cost than shipping-in fertilizers. This in turn benefits the community who has access to locally grown food...and so the cycle is completed: from farm to table then from table to farm, where compost is made, and the cycle begins again! - Andrea Conway, CEO

Working Together to Reduce Waste

☼ The **City of Bloomington's** Climate Action Plan Goal 5.1 to increase organic waste diversion by 40% of 2018 levels has made them a natural Earthkeepers partner.

- Earthkeepers joined the city's Steering Team for the "1000 Households Who Mulch" 2021-2022 pilot program. This initiative promoted sustainable fall leaf management with the goal of reducing energy and pollution costs associated with vacuuming leaves. The program's 493 participant households prevented 14.3 tons of CO_2 emissions related to leaf collection.

- In 2021, the **Bloomington Parks and Recreation Department** added 2 organics drop-off sites at Switchyard and Bryan parks, totaling 9 drop-off sites across the city and county as we make food waste disposal more accessible for local residents.

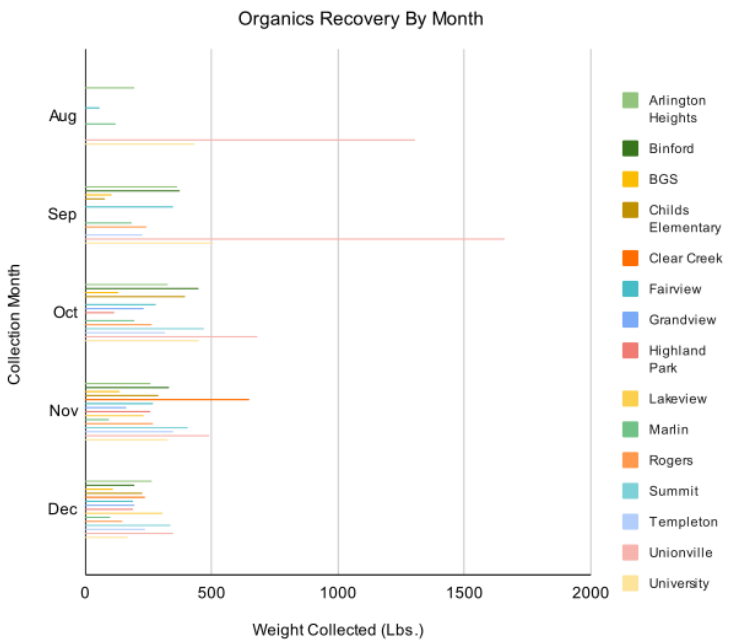
- The city's **Department of Economic and Sustainable Development** in partnership with EarthKeepers launched a 2022 "Compost Up, Downtown" pilot program to incentivize local restaurants to easily and affordably reduce and divert their food waste from landfills. Over the course of 2022, we provided each of the 16 participant restaurants our services over a 3-month trial period. We conducted waste audits to help restaurants adjust procurement and reduce waste, we trained kitchen staff, provided technical support, and collected food waste.

☼ In 2022, the **Monroe County Community School Corporation** contracted with us to serve all 21 of the county's elementary, secondary, and high schools. Last year, we captured 9.14 tons of waste from schools, preventing 2.28 tons of methane emissions at local landfills, which is equivalent to about 5,835 gallons of gasoline!

☼ As a community leader in sustainable business, **Cook Medical** has been a long-time partner since signing up with us in 2019. Today, Earthkeepers collects scraps and compostables from 5 of their medical campuses. We bring our crew and waste bins to their annual November "Cooksgiving" event, where we help Cook employees dispose of their leftovers and compostables while helping educate them about the importance of reducing waste and composting.

☼ Earthkeepers worked with the **Monroe County Soil and Water Conservation District** to promote compost as beneficial for soil remediation. This partnership initiated a new program to offer matching grants to county residents for purchasing compost for soil erosion control and improving soil health. We also brought together the City of Bloomington and the Soil and Waters Conservation District to offer city residents free or discounted soil tests to help households assess their soil remediation needs.

Sharing the Wealth of Our Impact



MCCSC Composting Impact Report, Calendar Year 2022

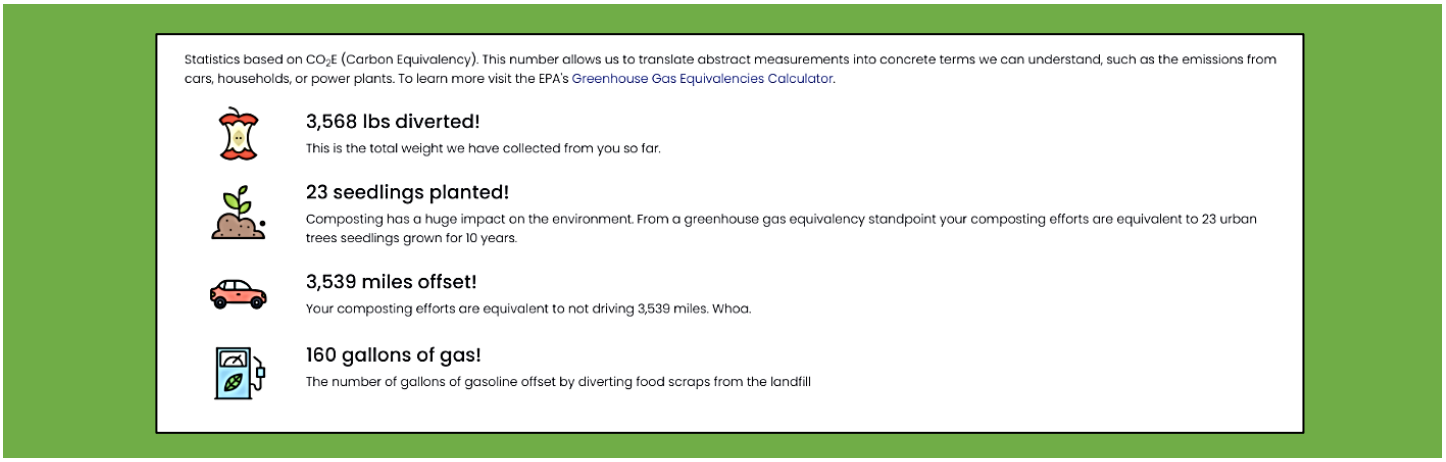
During 2022, MCCSC diverted a total of 18,274 lbs (9.14 tons) of organic waste from the landfill with EarthKeepers Compost. By composting these materials, local landfill methane emissions were reduced by 2.28 tons, equivalent to 51.85 metric tons of CO2 emissions.

This greenhouse gas reduction is equivalent to preventing 5,835 gallons of gasoline from being consumed, or eliminating 10.1 home's electricity consumption for one year. It is also the equivalent amount of carbon sequestered by 6.1 acres of U.S. forests in one year. (source: EPA greenhouse gas equivalences calculator)

Our crew maintains Earthkeepers' efficient data tracking system by weighing and recording every ounce of food waste they collect on our weekly pickup routes. This data helps us assess and share how well we are reaching our target of reducing 40% of local organic and compostable landfilled waste.

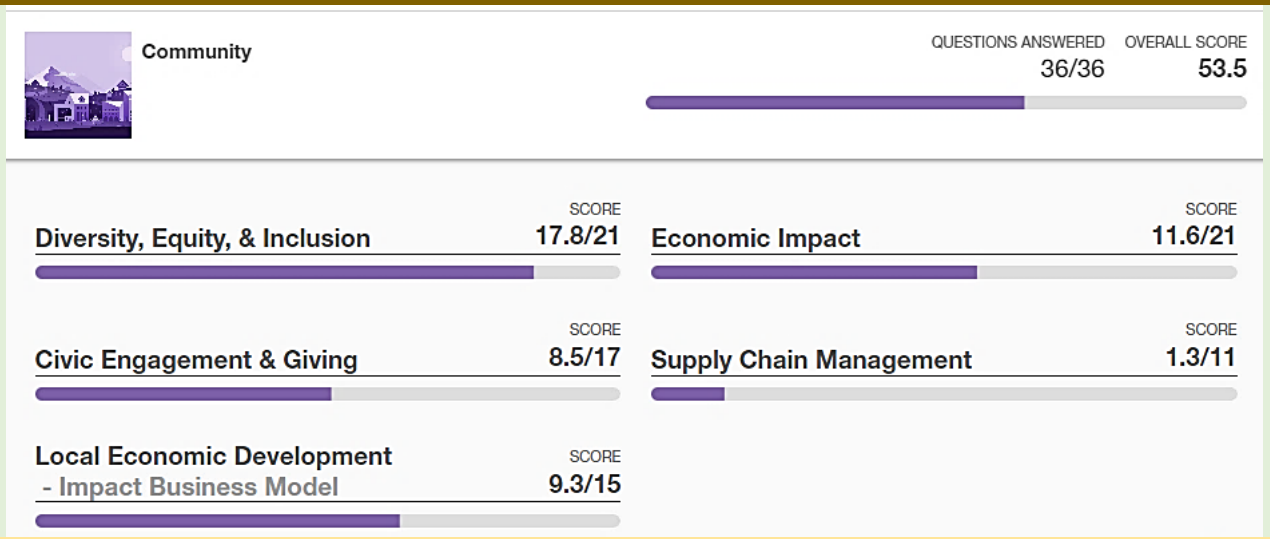
For each client, we plug this data into the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) GHG equivalencies calculator to determine the levels of methane emissions prevented, equivalent tons of CO_2, and other equivalent metrics such as gasoline and home energy consumption common to most consumers. Our commercial clients receive monthly impact reports that show these quantities in detail alongside an annual overview of their food waste diversion efforts (see left).

Our subscription-based residential and drop-off service clients can conveniently access similar information any time via our online portal. We show them the pounds of waste they divert (see example below) and translate that into easy-to-understand figures, such as the number of miles or gallons of gas offset by composting instead of landfilling their organic waste!



Community

Earthkeepers scored **53.5 out of 85** on our impact on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), economy, civic engagement and giving, and supply chain management in our locality



12 Employees, $16.50 Hourly Wage

9 Employees Added Since 2020 ·Increased hourly wage from $15.00

$50,000 Recycling Market Development Grant

Purchased Dump Truck and Truck Loader for More Hauling and Processing

3 New Fleet Vehicles

More Routes and Drivers

2nd Local Composting Site

Application in Process with IDEM

Engagement and Education

Downtown Bloomington, Inc. · Bloomington Chamber of Commerce · Bloomington Economic Development Corporation · Monroe County Solid Waste Management District ·Ivy Tech Sustainable Food Waste Management Course ·Lotus in the Park · Grandfalloon · Trashion Refashion

Committed to A Sustainable Local Economy

Earthkeepers is based on the outskirts of Bloomington and targets food waste diversion in the local metropolitan and surrounding Monroe County communities. We are a woman, minority-owned business prioritizing cultural and social diversity in our hiring, business operations, and stakeholder engagement. Our subscription-based curbside and drop-off composting services are a new industry in the Bloomington area, creating new models for other communities to easily adopt. And our living-wage jobs attract sustainably minded folk who help us maintain high standards.

Since 2020, we expanded our operations by creating 9 new jobs and increasing our processing capacity. Last year, we increased wages from $15.00 to $16.50 an hour for all 12 crew members, which is $4.06 higher than the average hourly wage for low-moderate income levels in Monroe County. With a $50,000 Recycling Market Development Grant awarded through the IDEM, we purchased a new dump truck and truck loader, increasing the volume of waste we can process and tripling productivity. We also used a portion of our revenue to add 3 vehicles to our fleet since 2020, allowing us to add more routes and drivers to our collection operations. With a larger crew and more equipment, we have processed an additional 2 million pounds of food waste into rich compost over the last 2 years alone!

Lastly, in 2022, Earthkeepers submitted an application to IDEM to add a second composting site in Monroe County. Once approved, a second site will help us expand business and support our growing customer base as we usher in the next phase of diverting more food waste.

Engaging Across Business and Public Sectors

Earthkeepers is a commercial and public community organization member, which helps us build relationships and educate stakeholders to benefit our economic, social, and environmental future.

In 2022 Earthkeepers joined **Downtown Bloomington, Inc**. as a Champion member, the **Bloomington Economic Development Corporation's** Board of Directors, and the **Greater Bloomington Chamber of Commerce.** Last year, we developed the "Transformational Strategy Project: Culture of Composting" campaign, promoting a business case for sustainable waste management. We presented it publicly to Bloomington's commercial sector on the financial and environmental benefits of composting and using our services.

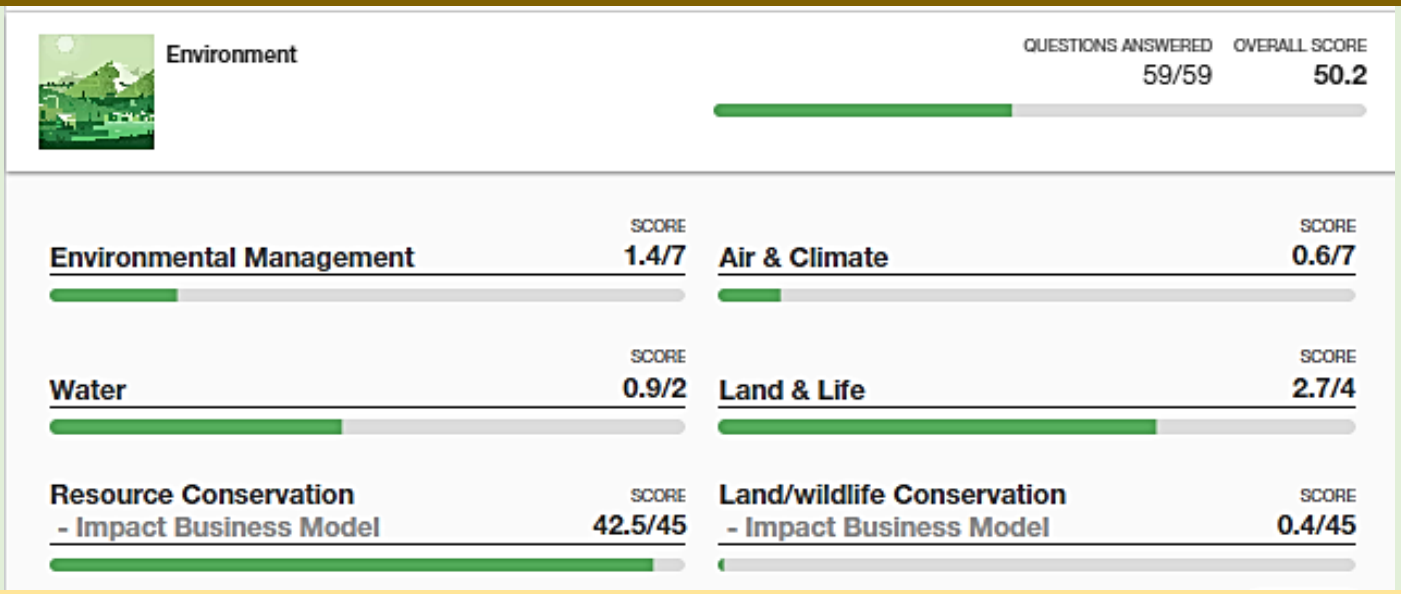
Ryan Conway, COO, has been a member of the **Monroe County Solid Waste Management District Citizens Action Committee** since 2018. As an industry representative, he helped plan and write the district's 2021 5-Year Solid Waste Management Plan, outlining Monroe County's strategy for educating residents and organizations, increasing source reduction and waste diversion, and working with disposal facilities.

Guiding Community Waste Reduction and Diversion

Earthkeepers offers collection services at public events, where we educate individuals about waste management, composting, and recycling while helping divert compostables! We set up our waste bins and information table to engage and educate with visuals and games to help kids and adults learn more about waste management and soil health. In 2022, we served three community events promoting art, music, literature, fashion, and environmental sustainability, including **Lotus in the Park**, **Granfalloon**, and **Trashion Refashion**. Earthkeepers also hosted a 2021 course at Ivy Tech's Center for Lifelong Learning, helping us educate more local adults on sustainable food waste management and composting benefits and best practices.

Environment

Earthkeepers scored **50.2 out of 110** on the ways our environmental management and stewardship have impacted climate, air, water, land, and life



711 Tons Food Waste Diverted

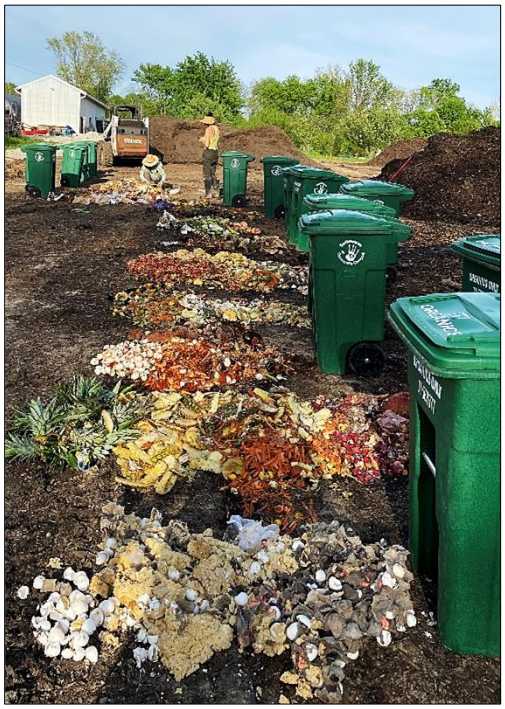
178 Tons Methane Emissions Prevented from Landfills

4,031 Equivalent Tons CO2 Prevented

Lab-tested, static aerated, nutrient-rich compost

Grey Water Reuse and **Rainwater Harvesting**

Conserving Natural Resources for a Better Climate



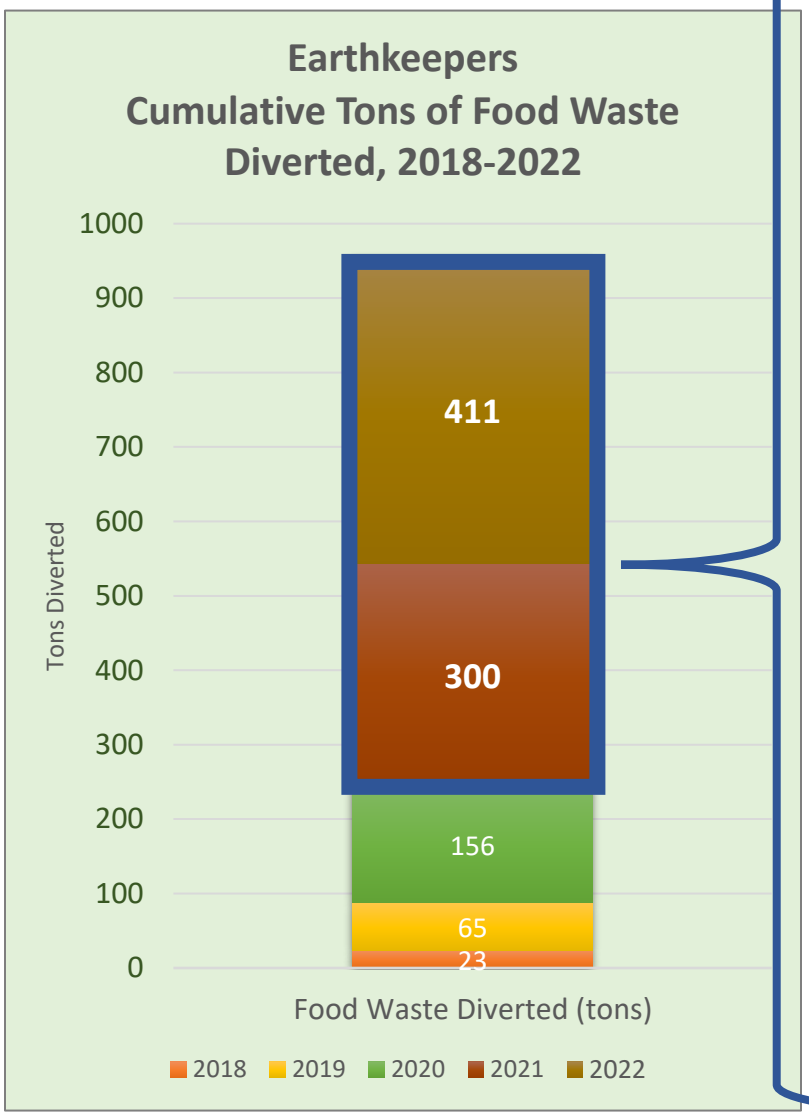
Earthkeepers is a local leader in developing new waste management streams to conserve natural resources. Sending valuable food waste to be buried in landfills in neighboring communities accounts for 18% of our national emission of methane, a GHG with 25 times greater global warming potential than CO_2. By instead diverting food waste from homes, businesses, public institutions, and events we are preventing GHG emissions and cultivating rich compost for local gardeners, landscapers, sustainable farmers, and storm and erosion control managers.

We educate our community on the benefits of food waste reduction and composting for our soil and water systems, while also helping residents access soil testing and compost through a cooperative cost-share program we developed with the **Monroe County Soil and Water Conservation District**. Earthkeepers hosts backyard composting workshops and provides outreach to schools, nonprofits, city governments, and organizations. In this way, we raise local awareness of the benefits of sustainable waste management systems, share scientific data and provide technical assistance on composting to help reduce our community's environmental footprint for healthier soil, water, agricultural, and climate systems.

With a larger fleet, more crew members, and new composting equipment we have diverted 711 tons of food waste since 2020! Earthkeepers rate of food waste diversion has increased by an average rate of 1.12 since first beginning in 2018 and in just the last year we collected 300 tons from our residential and commercial clients.

The Power of Our Environmental Impact

Earthkeepers has diverted a lifetime total of 955 tons of food waste. Since our previous reporting period in 2020, we kept a total of 711 tons of organic waste out of landfills. As these figures show, reducing our waste and collecting it to produce compost can prevent significant levels of GHG emissions and help reduce our environmental footprint.



711
Tons of Organic Waste Diverted since 2020

Prevented

178
Tons of Methane Emissions from Landfilled Waste

The Same As

4,031
Metric Tons of CO2

Or Consuming

453,618
Gallons of Gasoline

Or the Carbon Sequestered by

4,771
Acres of Forests Annually

Cultivating Better Compost for Better Land

Earthkeepers operates alongside our IDEM-registered specialty crop farm, Fable Farms, where we implement the highest industry standards to process our food waste into lab-tested, nutrient-rich compost. Trained through the **US Composting Council's** 40-hour Compost Facility Operator course, we implement state-of-the-art protocols for hot composting to prevent the spread of weed seed and kill pathogens, making our product ideal for a wide range of land applications.

In 2022, we consulted with industry-leading compost aeration experts **O2 Compost** to transition from turned windrow composting to aerated static piles (see left), helping us reduce diesel emissions from mechanical turning. This will use less land, reduce odors and volatile solids, and eliminate pathogens while efficiently aerating our consistently high-quality compost.

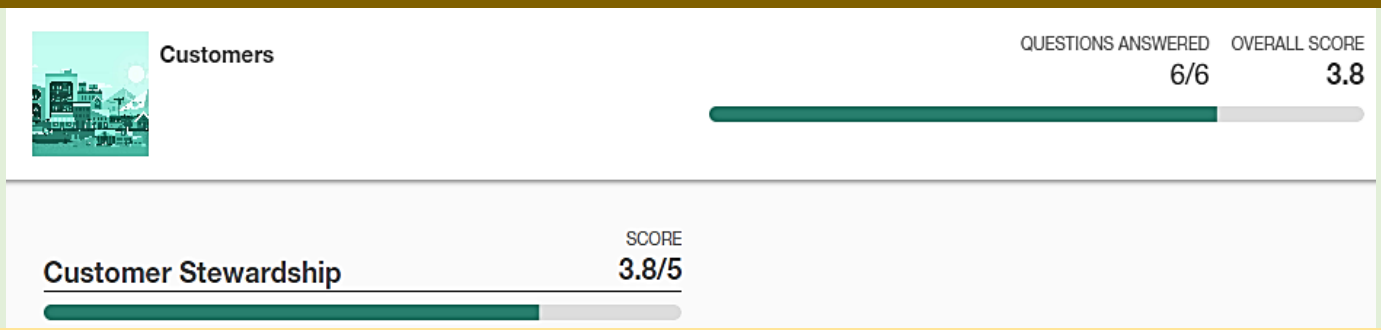
Once processed, each batch of Earthkeepers' compost is tested by A&L Great Lakes Labs. We take this extra step, ensuring that any compost purchased from our farm is safe from elements and compounds that pose a threat to our community's water, soil, and wildlife.

Reusing and Protecting Water Resources

Water is essential to our operations, from cleaning equipment to irrigating compost. Our crew pressure washes each bucket and roller bin of waste we collect, helping us effectively clean equipment while using minimal water. We then reuse this grey water to keep our active compost piles moist. We also implement controls, inspected by IDEM, to prevent nutrient pollution from entering our groundwater and farm-adjacent waterway.

Customers

Earthkeepers scored **3.8 out of 5** on how we have stewarded customers through the quality of our products, services, ethical marketing, data and security, and educational and social outreach



Curbside Collection

9 Community Drop-Off Sites

Trusted by Medical Facilities

Precision-Timed Bin Swaps

Commercial Services and **Events**

Food Waste and **Composting Education**

A Trusted Partner in Sustainability

Earthkeepers goes beyond simply collecting food waste, tailoring our services for the specific needs of each commercial client. Whether an organization prioritizes sterile equipment, a successful event, precision-timed bin swaps, or education and outreach, Earthkeepers accommodates our customers' standards and needs.

As a partner with Cook Medical, we acid-sanitize and gas-sterilize every bin we deliver daily to their 5 local manufacturing facilities. Maintaining this high standard of cleanliness has established us as a trusted service with Cook since 2019. We also provide flexible and precision-timed roller bin swaps, so our clients' staff can rely on us to have clean receptacles down to the minute they need them.

We collaborate with each client, determining the necessary collection containers, signage, and educational support to help their operations and composting efforts run successfully. In the process, we also help residents, event attendees, and staff learn strategies to reduce waste upfront and prevent contamination in their compostable waste by providing presentations, conducting waste audits, creating customized signage, and providing quarterly impact reports.

Sustainable Services for All Budgets and Households

With 9 community drop-offs and curbside collection for houses, apartments, and condos, we make it easier for all Bloomington and Monroe County residents to divert organic waste from landfills regardless of space, location, or homeowner permission. Our services are accessible for all incomes with fees as low as $10 a month. And to help educate residential clients about food waste contamination, we provide downloadable and printable signage via our website indicating what materials we accept.

Challenges to Providing Public Benefits

Keeping Contamination Out

Food waste contamination is an obstacle for most sustainable food waste management systems, and Earthkeepers is no exception. Non-compostable items, or contamination, in our organic waste stream threatens the success of our mission, increasing costs as we spend more time auditing our waste (see right) and retraining clients.

As we build a local culture around composting, we seek new ways to incentivize our commercial clients to commit to education around reducing waste and contamination. We also find ways to help them consistently integrate food waste management into their operations, especially given elevated levels of employee turnover in the food service industry. While our clients may be eager to sign up for more sustainable services, we continue to hold them to a higher standard and reinforce the importance around educating first to reduce waste and contamination later.

A critical yet common error in pushing for large-scale composting programs is neglecting extensive front-loading of education, incentive, and enforcement around contamination. We believe in program structures that actively anticipate user needs and behaviors, which take time to properly build, test, retest, and calibrate.

– Andrea, CEO, and Ryan Conway, COO

Growing With the Size of Our Operations

Since 2020, we have expanded our operating capacity as the volume of our diverted food waste has continued to increase. At the same time, as the COVID-19 pandemic pushed people to eat at home more frequently than dine out, we adjusted our operations to accommodate shifts in the balance between our commercial and residential clients.

In 2022, supply chain issues temporarily slowed down our short-term waste reduction and diversion efforts. We realized that to better manage the size of our operations and maintain our bin collection and servicing schedule, we would need a larger fleet and crew. We expended extra time and revenue to add 3 new vehicles and hire 9 employees to help us continue keep up with local demand for food waste collection services.

And while the pandemic shifted behaviors and more people have opted to eat in or cook meals from home, Earthkeepers continued adapting to a changing economy. With fewer customers eating in, restaurants have had less incentive and financial opportunity to sign up for our services. Despite this a shift in our commercial client base, however, more residents have responded to staying in more by subscribing to our residential pick-up and community drop-off services.

Benefit Director Statement

As Benefit Director of Earthkeepers, Ryan Edwards confirms that this benefit corporation has followed through in its mission to reduce and divert food waste through food waste collection services, education, and community engagement. In doing so, Andrea Conway, Chief Executive Officer, and Ryan Conway, Chief Operating Officer, have fulfilled their duty to provide environmental and social benefits to their partners and community stakeholders.

Endnotes

[i] US Environmental Protection Agency. 2023. *Basic Information About Landfill Gas.* March 23. Accessed April 1, 2023. https://www.epa.gov/lmop/basic-information-about-landfill-gas.

[ii] Goldstein, Nora. 2019. "Food Waste Composting Infrastructure In The U.S." *BioCycle.* January 4. Accessed April 1, 2023.

[iii] Kessler Consulting, Inc. 2018. "Monroe County Solid Waste Management District Organic Waste Recovery Analysis." Accessed April 1, 2023. chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://static1.squarespace.com/static/614351a889dbcd44d3ded37b/t/61b36e7023ba8e58db7d5742/1639149171692/2016+Organic+Waste+Recovery+Analysis+-+Final+Report+%28Kessler+Consulting%29.pdf.

[iv] US Environmental Protection Agency. 2022. *Greenhouse Gas Equivalencies Calculator.* October 11. Accessed April 1, 2023. https://www.epa.gov/energy/greenhouse-gas-equivalencies-calculator.