**December 12, 2025**

Solid Waste Management Program
Washington Department of Ecology
P.O. Box 47600
Olympia, WA 98504-7600

**Re: RNG COALITION Comments on Organics Management Rulemaking – Chapter 173-350 WAC**

We appreciate the opportunity to provide comments on the Department of Ecology's proposed updates to Chapter 173-350 WAC governing organic materials management.

Our members strongly support Washington's goals to reduce food waste, divert organic materials from landfills, minimize contamination, and protect public health and environmental quality. Anaerobic digestion and RNG production play a critical role in achieving these goals by enabling the recovery of organic materials that would otherwise be landfilled, while simultaneously delivering substantial methane emissions reductions and renewable energy benefits.

**Support for Modernization and Outcome-Based Standards**

The RNG COALITION appreciates Ecology's efforts to modernize the state's organics management framework to reflect evolving technologies and operational realities. Strengthening contamination standards for finished organic products is appropriate and necessary to maintain public confidence in compost, digestate, and other recycled organics products. We support Ecology's focus on environmental outcomes rather than prescriptive approaches tied to legacy practices.

At the same time, it is essential that updated rules preserve flexibility in how compliance is achieved. Washington's organics management system depends on a diverse ecosystem of processing technologies, including composting and anaerobic digestion. These pathways are complementary, not competitive, and together provide the capacity needed to meet statewide diversion and climate objectives.

**Processor Responsibility and Practical Compliance Pathways**

As Ecology considers changes to contamination thresholds and source-separation requirements, we urge the Department to clearly maintain the principle that **processors are responsible for meeting finished-product quality standards**.

Placing additional separation, depackaging, or contamination-control obligations upstream on generators such as grocery retailers, restaurants, and hospitality businesses would be impractical and counterproductive. These businesses operate in space and labor constrained environments and do not possess the equipment or expertise necessary to achieve increasingly stringent contamination thresholds at the source. In fact, shifting these responsibilities upstream risks increasing costs, reducing participation, and ultimately undermining diversion goals.

**Technology Neutrality and Market Choice**

The RNG COALITION strongly encourages Ecology to preserve **technology-neutral rules** that do not steer organic materials toward one processing pathway over another. Policies that implicitly favor composting over anaerobic digestion or restrict the ability digestion facilities to accept certain feedstocks would limit innovation, reduce competition, and constrain the state's overall organics processing capacity.

Anaerobic digestion facilities routinely achieve contamination performance equal to or better than legacy systems while enabling recovery of packaged and mixed food waste that would otherwise be disposed of. These facilities also deliver additional climate benefits by capturing methane that would be emitted during landfilling or uncontrolled decomposition. Maintaining multiple viable processing pathways improves environmental performance, controls costs for regulated entities, and strengthens system resilience.

Washington's organics management laws are intended to increase diversion, reduce emissions, and encourage innovation, not to lock the state into historical operational models. Ensuring that WAC 173-350 reflects current and emerging technologies is consistent with Washington's broader climate and decarbonization objectives.

Finally, we caution against regulatory approaches that would have the practical effect of selecting preferred processing pathways rather than enforcing consistent environmental outcomes. The Department's role in this rulemaking is to protect environmental quality and reduce contamination in finished organic products, not to constrain the market to the capabilities of any single technology or business model. Rules that implicitly favor one processing pathway over another risk limiting innovation, discouraging private investment in advanced infrastructure, and reducing overall system capacity. A technology-neutral framework that holds all processors accountable to the same finished-product standards is the most effective way to avoid picking winners and losers while ensuring strong environmental performance.

**Conclusion**

The RNG COALITION appreciates Ecology's engagement with stakeholders throughout this rulemaking process. We respectfully urge the Department to finalize updates to Chapter 173-350 WAC that:

- Affirm that finished-product contamination standards apply at the processor level, consistent with environmental performance outcomes rather than generator-side limitations.
- Preserve technology-neutral compliance pathways such as anaerobic digestion.
- Avoid shifting impractical operational burdens like depackaging upstream to organic material generators.
- Support innovation, competition, and scalable solutions across the organics management system.

We appreciate the Department's leadership and commitment to stakeholder engagement throughout this process. Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions.

Sincerely,

/s/

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