
San Mateo Resource Conservation District honors Augustin Aguilar with Nature Champion Award for compost system work at UCCE Elkus Ranch (</blog/organic-materials-management/article/nrc-nature-champion-award>)

Submitted by MCohen on December 14th, 2025

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From the soil up, conservation projects rely on the people whose experience and knowledge of what works turn an idea into practice. The San Mateo Resource Conservation District (RCD) created the Nature Champion Award to recognize such individuals. On December 12th, the RCD presented Augustin Aguilar of the UCCE Elkus Ranch Environmental Education Center with the award for his work on the construction and successful implementation of an Aerobic Static Pile (ASP) composting system at the Ranch.

With its many farm animals, the Ranch generates several hundred pounds of manure and spent bedding every week. Composting harnesses microbial activity to transform this waste material into a stabilized, soil-building resource. The ASP system saves labor by periodically blowing air into the pile through perforated pipes, eliminating the need for regular mechanical turning. At the ceremony, both Mr. Aguilar and Ranch Coordinator Amy Bono praised the improvement in compost quality that the ASP system has brought about.

Project funding was secured through the efforts of San Mateo RCD Conservation Technical Advisor Doug Millar, working with San Mateo County Sustainability Specialist Jack Steinmann and others. This project is the first to be funded under California Assembly Bill 2346, which expands the range of eligible investments that local jurisdictions can count toward their state-mandated targets for procuring recovered organic waste products like compost.

Image





(A) *From left to right:* Barb Kipreos and Doug Millar of the San Mateo RCD with Nature Champion awardee Augustin Aguilar and UCCE Organics Materials Management Advisor Michael Cohen and San Mateo County Director Igor Lacan; (B) Assembling the ASP system on June 18, 2025 (*Counterclockwise from back left:* RCD Conservation Associate Clarissa Maciel, UCCE Master Composter Jack Carter, Mr. Millar, Mr. Aguilar, and UCCE Groundskeeper Bruno Acosta); (C) The assembled ASP system; (D) Mr. Aguilar building the ASP compost pile on July 16, 2025; (E) The completed ASP pile topped with a top layer of finished compost; and (F & G) Resident contributors to the compost feedstock at Elkus Ranch.

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