



2023

Compost Manufacturing Alliance Data Eval and Testing Intern

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Western Washington University

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COLLEGE OF THE ENVIRONMENT



Internship Title: Data Evaluation and Field-Testing Intern

Organization Worked For: Compost Manufacturing Alliance

Student Name: Emma Anderson

Internship Dates: 1/5/23 5/30/23

Faculty Advisor Name: Andy Bunn

Department: ESCI

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STUDENT SIGNATURE 

DATE: 6/8/20

I. STUDENT/INTERN INFORMATION

Name: Emma Anderson	W#: W01452903
Major: Environmental Science	Concentration: n/a
Internship Title: Data Evaluation and Field-Testing Intern	
Period of Internship: 1/5/23- 6/9/23	
Avg. Hours per Week: 7	Total Hours Worked: 171

II. HOST INSTITUTION INFORMATION

Institution Name: Compost Manufacturing Alliance
Institution Address: PO Box 1063, Port Orchard, WA 98336
Institution Mission: CMA is a global leader in providing industrial composting facilities an acceptance standard for compostables by performing field disintegration testing through several prominent processing methods to ensure products sent to industrial compost facilities adequately break down within the production cycle. When products marked “compostable” by packaging industry standards are not also tested in real world processes, the result is costly to compost facility owners, end users and municipalities. Instead of a singular approach to compostables, CMA connects supply chain leaders with top compost manufacturing facilities nationwide to ensure mutual success as co-creators of compost and compostables.
Supervisor Name and Title: Janet Thoman, Compliance Director
Supervisor Contact Information: Janet@composterapproved.com 425-999-2178

III. DESCRIPTION

Provide a brief description of the project or program on which you worked, the objectives of that project or program, and your role as an intern within that project or program:

CMA is a multinational company that has a goal to certify food ware products as compostable using ASTM standards and field disintegration in various climatic regions. This goal is achieved by many laboratory reports, months of testing, and heavy communication with the composter and the manufacturer.

My role at CMA was multifaceted. One half of my work consisted of fieldwork, and the other half was working on recertifications and learning the operations of the company. Towards the end, my boss and I attempted to solve, or help solve, an issue about on-campus composting that was brought to my attention but had limited luck with contacting the composter and the managers of Aramark who source food ware materials.

CMA has a small team of people that fulfill many roles. The fieldwork portion of the company aims to test products in the field for disintegration. This required me to fly to various places, including San Antonio, Texas, Napa, California, Saint Louis, Missouri, and Everett, Washington. While I was in each of these places, I communicated with the operations managers and office workers who would then help me find the compost pile and where I could sift the materials. The fieldwork aspect has two parts- sifting and placement. The placement portion of the test is when I would place the food ware materials that companies send to CMA to get tested. I would also take soil samples from each of the locations, which were then sent to a soil lab to test for various parameters and rule out, or understand, any underlying reasons for certain results or lack thereof. The sift portion happens after a batch of bags is cured in the compost pile for the specified amount of time. This requires meticulous sifting through the bags to collect any decomposed or intact samples that were originally whole and tagged. Careful quality control and labeling are required during these steps to ensure full accuracy when measuring field disintegration. Both of these steps are crucial for companies' products to be CMA certified and compostable, a widely known certification from composters across the nation. The goal is to reduce waste in composting facilities by providing knowledge and research about materials that decompose.

Throughout the six months, I met with various colleagues to learn about their role with CMA. I met with a compliance manager and learned about her duties, which were to ensure everything runs smoothly with testing, operations, and maintaining standards and order within the company. I met with the production manager, who processes the samples after I had sifted them, and she also described how to write and prepare photo reports. She also showed me how she carefully labels and places all of the samples into the bags to ensure that all of the SKUs are accounted for. Throughout these meetings, I was able to learn a lot about the behind-the-scenes of my field worker experience. I worked on recertifications mostly. This was an important process to maintain accuracy and timeliness in CMA's recertification process. I collected lots of data and separated it into dates, and then contacted the clients and told them what was required of them to recertify their products with CMA. The information had not been updated, and there were a lot of different versions of what needed to be recertified or not, so my job was to streamline this confusion.

IV. DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Provide a list of your specific duties and responsibilities as an intern:

- Field testing
- Processing test results
- Evaluating samples for disintegration against certification criteria
- Managing data for test tracking and record keeping
- Preparing technical reports of test results (photo reports, executed profiles)
- Data evaluation
- Compiling historical information from test results and compost parameters
- Evaluating data to determine best practices for tracking and capturing data prospectively

V. LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Describe what you learned from your internship and how this experience contributed to your educational

goals:

Beyond gaining an abundance of knowledge about CMA and processes, I learned to be patient. I learned that communicating with the composter, the clients, and other organizations takes a lot of time. I learned that it is important to be patient and do what you can, when you can. This skill contributed to my educational goals because it allowed me to understand why governmental processes take so long, and environmental decisions take a lot of time, and it gave me a general understanding of slow corporate processes. With my minor in political science and a desire to someday contribute to environmental politics, understanding the steady movement of processes and ideas is important. I learned how to communicate with clients effectively to ensure that they had the proper information to be able to recertify their products. This contributed to my educational goals because it encouraged me to communicate better with my professors and potential employers.

One of my educational goals is to apply my skills in laboratory classes and political science classes to help improve the efficacy of company's products. This experience contributes to my educational goals because CMA certifies products compostable or not, which is directly related to improving the terms of which companies can determine and advertise if their product will decompose in an industrial setting or not. My field work allowed me to continue to apply quality control and meticulous data recording.

I learned how difficult it is to know what is compostable or not, and what facilities accept what items. I did extensive research on WWU's websites, news articles, and clubs PowerPoints in order to understand what WWU accepts for composting or not. Each of the lists that I have found includes different information. I learned that the discrepancies between information makes it harder for the consumer to dispose of waste properly and that this is not an isolated issue to Western's campus. This contributes to my educational goals because I think that it would be interesting to advocate for this issue, which I tried to do but had little luck.

Overall, I learned a lot about CMA and compost throughout my internship. I really enjoyed learning the other side of my field work job, and understanding the processes through which standards are passed and abided by will come in handy in my future. I am very thankful for CMA giving me the opportunity to work for them.

VI. LITERATURE CITED

Provide reference information for all sources cited in your report:

Janet Thoman, CMA. 2023

WWU Zero Waste. Zero Waste PowerPoint, 2022.



Compost Manufacturing Alliance LLC, PO Box 1063, Port Orchard, WA 98366
janet@composterapproved.com Cell: 425-999-2178

APPENDIX I. SUPERVISOR LETTER

To Whom it May Concern:

Emma Anderson interned for our company from January 5, 2023, through May 30, 2023 (winter and spring quarter). Emma completed all assigned tasks as requested and met all expectations.

Emma worked the following hours per pay period:

Pay Period	Office Hours	Travel Dates	Travel Hours
1/9 – 1/22	7.5		
1/23 – 2/10	11.5	2/6-7	36
2/11 – 2/24	8		
2/25 – 3/3	6.5		
3/3 – 4/1		3/22-23	40
4/2 – 4/15*			
4/16 – 4/29		4/18-19	32
4/30 – 5/13	8		
5/14 – 5/27	4	5/16-17	33
Sub-Totals	45.5		141

*Timesheet for this period is unavailable. Considering Emma exceeded the required hours even without these dates, additional research to locate the timesheets will be performed only if requested.

Total Hours: 186.5

It was a pleasure working with Emma. She is responsible, resourceful, detailed, learns quickly and is just a very pleasant person to work with.

Thank you for the opportunity to work with Emma. I am only sorry that we did not have enough time to complete an interesting project that could have benefited the WWU campus and your local composter.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or require additional information.

COMPOST MANUFACTURING ALLIANCE LLC


 Janet L. Thoman
 Compliance Director