

5/4/2021

Hello friends,

NC HB 798, The North Carolina Healthy Soils Act, was introduced by Representative John Ager (D- Buncombe County) on May 3, 2021, and thus far has 4 co-sponsors. This Act recognizes that soil health encompasses the overall composition and fertility of soil; it includes the amount of organic matter and water-holding capacity of soil, and creates the capacity of soil to function as a vital biological system that sustains plants, animals, and humans. Supporting healthy soils is necessary for the continuous production of diverse food, fiber, and other agricultural crops. Goals of this Act include, but are not limited to, improving agricultural viability, farm profitability, food nutrition, and to support more stable climate conditions. This Act recognizes that compost can provide all of these benefits.

The Act will establish a fund within the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services to administer the Healthy Soils Program. Funds may be used by the Department for grants, research, technical assistance, educational material, and outreach to farmers whose management practices will contribute to healthy soils and watersheds.

It is also notable that in the proposed bi-partisan federal Agriculture Resilience Act (ARA), there is a stipulation that in order for a state to receive federal funding they must have a healthy soils program.

The “crossover deadline” is Thursday, May 13-- the date by which all bills must have passed either the House or the Senate chamber in order to be eligible for consideration, and bi-partisan support is needed. If you are in favor of any of the elements of the Healthy Soils Act, let our Representatives know! Find out who your rep is here:

<https://www.ncleg.gov/FindYourLegislators>. A guide for effectively contacting the legislature is included, and use language in this letter if that is helpful.

The benefits of using compost cannot be overstated. Using compost has been proven to improve soil health and help prevent soil erosion, and adds organic nutrients and retains water, which improves the biological, chemical and structural health of soil. The soil can then support healthier plants by efficiently transporting nutrients and water to them. Applying compost can reduce the need for repeated use of chemical fertilizers, which saves money and protects water resources. Because compost is made from organic residuals, using compost offers the significant benefit of diverting organic waste from needless and costly disposal. It is estimated that one cubic yard of compost can sequester more than 700 pounds of CO₂ in the soil.

Most sincerely,

NCCC Board of Directors