



## Marking a century of service to San Francisco

Sunday, September 20th marked the 100-year anniversary of the incorporation of Sunset Scavenger Company, a trash collection company founded by Genoese Italian immigrants. It is this history that laid the foundation for the company that became known as Recology.

In the early 1900s we collected discarded materials in horse-drawn wagons. Then came our first trucks, which featured hard-rubber tires, hand-cranks to start the engines, and open tops.

The trucks featured a set of metal stairs known among collectors as the “seven steps to heaven,” aptly named for the physical relief of dropping a heavy can full of material into the container at the top of the steps. These bright red vehicles became well-known symbols of trash collection in the city.

While the physicality of collection has changed over the course of the past century, Recology employee-owners still spend their days navigating the narrow alleyways and busy loading docks of San Francisco. Our work connects us to the distinct neighborhoods we serve and has provided a unique



The classic truck, Big Red, was the kind used by trash collection workers in Recology's early days.

opportunity to learn and grow alongside our customers.

Together we've experienced significant change over the past century. From the implementation of curbside recycling service to the addition of a third cart for organic materials, Recology and the City of San Francisco have worked hand in hand to reduce material sent to landfill and become a national leader in waste reduction and recovery.

We operate modern processing facilities, effectively managing more than 4,000 tons of material every day and successfully recovering most of it through recycling and composting

programs. As a 100 percent employee-owned company, Recology services also create local jobs and support the Bay Area economy.

Most recently, throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and impacts from the California climate fires, our city has come together to support the essential collection services needed to keep us all going strong. Recology employee-owners appreciate that support and are immensely proud of our history and partnership with the City of San Francisco.

We hope to continue serving our customers for a century to come.

Here's to the next 100 years!

## Investing today for a more sustainable future

San Francisco is now home to two of the most advanced recycling facilities in the nation.

Many people know about Recycle Central, the state-of-the-art facility Recology operates on Pier 96 to recycle bottles, cans, paper, and cardboard. The plant combines the efforts of our skilled employee-owners with optical and robotic sorting systems to produce finished bales of recycling with less than 1 percent impurities.

A second recycling plant Recology operates now stands among the best in the U.S. thanks to an \$8 million upgrade. It's called the integrated Material Recovery Facility, iMRF, and recycles wood, metal, sheetrock, cardboard, and hard plastics from construction and demolition projects.

In the past two months crews installed cutting-edge technology in the iMRF, including five robotic sorters,



two optical sorters, two massive shredders, a density separator, and a debris roll screen. This new equipment, combined with the efforts of our employee-owners, will allow us to process 25 percent more material and increase the facility's recycling rate by 50 percent.

The iMRF is located adjacent to

Recology's Transfer Station complex, home to the largest privately owned solar array in San Francisco. Energy from this system helps power our operations, including equipment inside the iMRF.

Together, these two plants recycle approximately 1,200 tons of material per day.

The best way to contact us is through email: [CustomerService@RecologySF.com](mailto:CustomerService@RecologySF.com)

# Can applying compost help reduce the risk of fire and slow climate change? The answer may surprise you



Photo: Larry Strong, strongphotos.com

Moisture in the topsoil and green plants helped Be Love Farm (left) survive the Hennessey Fire north of Vacaville.

Regenerative agriculture — farming practices that rebuild topsoil, increase biodiversity, improve the water cycle, and enhance carbon sequestration — is gaining new attention. And San Franciscans participating in the City's curbside composting program are directly involved.

Be Love Farm and B&B ([BeLoveFarm.com](http://BeLoveFarm.com)), located three miles north of Vacaville, is a prime example. Owner Matthew Engelhart has applied compost to the farm for years. Matthew also owns Gracias Madre, the popular restaurant on Mission Street.

Fruits and vegetables grown at Be Love are sold at the farm and become tasty dishes served at the San Francisco restaurant. The ends of carrots and other trimmings from the preparation of meals go into green bins and get picked up by Recology. The scraps become compost that goes on the farm.

## MOIST SOIL HELPS RESIST FIRE

Compost plays a key role in keeping water available to plants. That's because good quality compost is 50 percent humus by weight, and humus is a natural sponge that attracts and retains water.

The importance of keeping moisture in the soil was put to the ultimate test at Be Love the night of Aug. 18, 2020 when the Hennessey Fire scorched the Vaca Mountains and rolled down hillsides into Pleasant Valley. The fire destroyed hundreds of structures and burned to the edges of the farm.

Sparks and embers from the fire ignited wood chips around the base of Matthew's trees, but the fire did not take the farm thanks, in part, to Be Love's healthy soil. Matthew had irrigated his land and the humus and organic matter in his topsoil held water near the surface.

"Where plants are green and soil is moist the fire had nothing to feed on," Matthew said.

## KISS THE GROUND

Matthew passed his love for regenerative farming to his son Ryland. Ryland, in turn, inspired Rebecca and Josh Tickell of Big Picture Ranch in Ojai, California to make a documentary about the importance of healthy soil in the quest to slow climate change.

The film, seven years in the making, is called *Kiss The Ground*. The acclaimed movie, narrated by actor Woody Harrelson, is on Netflix and includes a segment about San Francisco's curbside composting program.

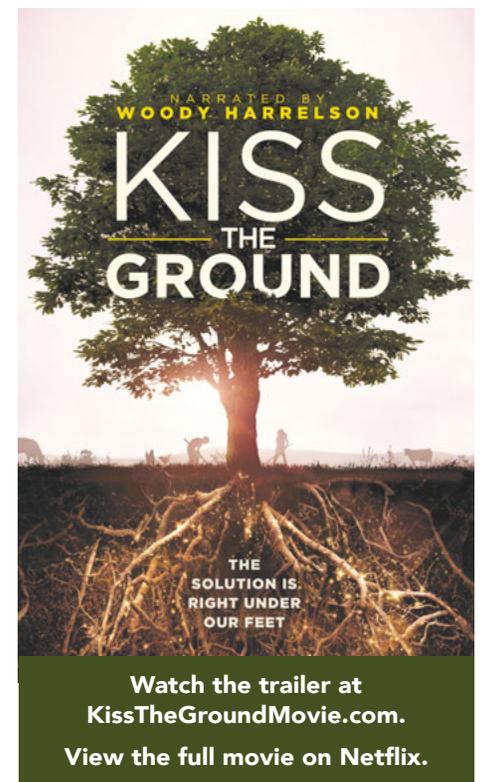
[KissTheGround.com](http://KissTheGround.com) is a nonprofit that offers educational programs to farmers and civic leaders and advocates for regenerative agriculture.

The San Francisco model of collecting compostable materials at the curb and turning them into finished compost that goes onto farms is an important part of this movement.

By replicating San Francisco's program, cities around the world could simultaneously reduce greenhouse gas emissions from landfills and help farms improve soil health.

Recology created a list of "10 Reasons to Compost." Now we are adding an 11th reason:

Composting helps reduce fire risk. This occurs because compost holds moisture from rain and irrigation in topsoil and makes water available to plants.



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