



AFTERBURN REPORT 2025

Kat Nadel & Lauren Turk, Project Leads



Black Rock Compost is a volunteer-run food waste collection program that offers the participants of Burning Man the opportunity to learn about the value of composting and to contribute to sustainability efforts and [Burning Man's 2030 Environmental Sustainability Roadmap](#).

This year, Black Rock Compost returned to Black Rock City for our 10th year.

Participating camps submitted a registration form which allows our team to collect information regarding their camp size, location, expected volume of food waste, and contact details for their on-playa compost lead. This information helped us plan for collection readiness and communicate with participants via email and the Facebook Group.

Participants and interested Burners are encouraged to join the [Black Rock Compost Facebook group](#) to share ideas and best practices with each other, celebrate successes, and learn how to best participate in the

program.

New This Year!

With a refreshed look and renewed spirit, 2025 marked the debut of our new branding, symbolized by a bright and wild yellow daisy native to the Black Rock desert. The flower represents resilience and regeneration: a plant that thrives in the harshest conditions, much like the compost community blooming on the playa. This new visual identity allows us to better connect participants across camps and seasons, highlighting that composting at Burning Man is not just about waste reduction, it's about regenerating life from what's been discarded. Black Rock Compost embodies the Burning Man principles of **Leave No Trace**, **Radical Self Reliance**, and **Communal Effort**. Like the yellow daisy, we strive not only to leave a clean footprint, but to help the Earth flourish by **leaving it better than we found it**.

Partnerships & Compost Hosts

Now in its second year of partnership with the [Green Theme Camp Community \(GTCC\)](#), Black Rock Compost continues to serve as a living model for circular systems on playa, showing what's possible when camps collaborate toward regeneration.

This year, our partnership network grew stronger with the return of **IDEATE**, our longtime home base and now 501(c)(3) sponsor, alongside **Get Your Shit Together (GYST)** and **Ocean Beach**, the latter returning as a host camp from 2024. Each camp resourced the program with dedicated volunteers from within their community, creating a distributed model of stewardship that reflects Burning Man's collaborative spirit.

Together, these host camps collected **18 cubic yards—roughly 18,000lbs—of organic waste** from over **9,000 Burners**. All hosts received pre-playa and on-playa training in our **leak prevention methodology**, which involved layering wood chips to absorb liquids and adding biochar to capture carbon that would otherwise release as methane.

This collective effort, powered by partnership, ingenuity and shared commitment, kept the playa **clean, dry, and MOOP-free**, demonstrating how regenerative systems can be successful even in the desert.

Tools for Success

Each registrant received a **printable booklet** with the *Do's and Don'ts of Composting*, drying methods, and a *Moisture Meter* graphic. These tools were designed to support camp sustainability leads in taking responsibility for their waste streams, tracking and improving food waste drying practices, and successfully participating under the program guidelines.

No Food Scraps Left Behind

After receiving thoughtful feedback in 2024 from participants who were disappointed when their food waste was turned away for being too wet, we launched the 2025 **"No Food Scraps Left Behind"** policy. This year, *all* food waste was accepted regardless of moisture level. To keep this sustainable, we trained host collection camps on MOOP prevention techniques and conducted on-playa visits to ensure liquid mitigation practices were being followed. The result?

Happy campers, clean dumpsters, and a more inclusive composting experience for everyone.



Key Outcomes:

- Over 9,000 individuals participated in composting on playa this year!
- Over 18,000 pounds (18 yards) of organics diverted and composted with Full Circle Compost
- Decreased off-gassing of 50% by diverting food waste from landfills

Activities & Engagement:

- 4 pre-playa *How To* community calls with presentations on specific focus areas for camp leads and sustainability leads of IDEATE, GYST, and Ocean Beach
- Engagement with participants of the Facebook group and email
- ~200 camps registered to join
- 6 on-playa volunteer meetings / check ins
- Crowdfunded \$11,000 from the community of participants to fully-fund our costs and expenses for equipment rental, waste transportation and processing with Full Circle, branding and marketing deliverables, and future educational events and programs
- Post-playa feedback survey sent to 200 people with a 10% response rate. See results below. •
- Kat Nadel and Lauren Turk gave a campfire talk for Burning Man in April on behalf of BLAST • Kat also gave a talk at the Camp Symposium on behalf of BLAST
- Worked with sustainability supporters inside the Burning Man Org, namely Mr. Blue, Zac Cirivello, Christopher Breedlove, Stephen Chun, and Liza to ensure the success of the program • Discussed with members of Paiute tribe and Food Bank Collection on future collaborations



Feedback Summary

Black Rock Compost received **19 survey responses** from the 2025 program, comprising **5 Leads** (who

coordinated and hosted compost collection) and **14 Participants** (who brought food scraps on behalf of their camps). Overall satisfaction was high across both stakeholder groups, with strong support for the new policy changes and positive experiences with program operations despite challenging weather conditions.

Key Performance Indicators

Quantitative Results (1-5 scale, 5 = highest)

Metric	Lead	Participants Overall
New Policy Acceptance	4.0	4.5
Instructions Clarity	4.4	4.4
Site Maintenance Quality	4.4	4.6

TOP 5 SUCCESSES

For PARTICIPANTS:

1. **Strong Environmental Motivation & Values Alignment** - Participants demonstrated deep commitment to sustainability, citing waste reduction, Leave No Trace principles, and climate impact as primary motivators. Many noted composting aligned with their default-world practices.
2. **New "All Moisture Levels" Policy Highly Appreciated** - The policy change to accept food scraps at any moisture level was rated 4.5/5, with participants specifically noting this made participation more accessible and reduced barriers.
3. **Excellent Site Maintenance** - Collection sites received a 4.8/5 rating for being organized and enjoyable, indicating strong operational management despite weather challenges.
4. **Clear Instructions** - 4.4/5 rating shows participants generally found composting instructions easy to understand and follow.
5. **Waste Reduction Success** - Multiple participants noted significant reduction in trash volume, reduced MOOP (Matter Out of Place), and elimination of food waste odors from their camps.

For LEADS:

1. **Exceptional Site Organization** - Leads rated site maintenance 4.6/5, demonstrating pride in and satisfaction with the collection operations they managed.
2. **Mission-Driven Commitment** - Leads showed strong philosophical alignment with Burning Man principles and sustainability goals, viewing composting as "the right thing to do" and part of long-term burn culture.
3. **Effective Communication Systems** - Instructions were rated 4.4/5, with leads noting successful transmission of composting protocols to their camp members.
4. **Veteran Program Participation** - Several leads indicated multi-year participation (up to 15 of 23 burns), demonstrating program sustainability and community building.
5. **Weather Resilience** - Despite unprecedented rain and wind challenges, leads successfully maintained operations and adapted their systems, showing program robustness.

TOP 3 AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

For PARTICIPANTS:

1. Geographic Coverage & Accessibility

- **Issue:** Limited collection sites created long transport distances for camps far from Center Camp, particularly in the 9:00 sector
- **Impact:** Participants noted difficulty transporting scraps, with some using art cars or wagons for long hauls
- **Recommendation:** Expand to 3-5 collection sites distributed around the city (similar to Arctica model) to reduce transport burden

2. Drying Equipment & Instructions

- **Issue:** The mesh bags provided were difficult to use with standard 5-gallon collection buckets; rain complicated drying efforts
- **Impact:** Some scraps blew away, didn't dry fully, or participants abandoned drying altogether
- **Recommendation:** Provide bucket-compatible mesh systems or clearer drying alternatives; develop weather-contingent guidance

3. Camp-Level Education & Signage

- **Issue:** Camp members forgot protocols (removing stickers from fruit, proper sorting), and many chose to trash scraps instead of composting
- **Impact:** Reduced participation rates within camps and potential contamination
- **Recommendation:** Provide template signage for camps, simple visual guides, and pre-event educational materials for camp leadership to distribute

For LEADS:

1. Collection Window & End-of-Event Timing

- **Issue:** Collection sites closed Saturday/Sunday, but many camps strike Monday/Tuesday, creating inconvenient timing for final drop-offs
- **Impact:** Some leads/participants couldn't drop scraps and took them home or disposed of them otherwise
- **Recommendation:** Extend collection through Monday or provide Monday drop-off options for striking camps

2. Weather-Related Operational Challenges

- **Issue:** Rain and wind created MOOP concerns, drying difficulties, and complicated setup/teardown of drying stations
- **Impact:** Increased workload for leads managing soggy materials and maintaining organized sites
- **Recommendation:** Develop severe weather protocols, provide tarps/covering systems, and create backup plans for wet composting scenarios

3. After-Hours Dumping & Communication

- **Issue:** Concern about people dumping food scraps outside collection hours, creating maintenance and MOOP issues
- **Impact:** Additional burden on leads to manage unauthorized deposits
- **Recommendation:** Increase communications via BMIR PSAs about proper drop-off times; improve signage about hours; consider volunteer monitoring during high-traffic periods

Key Differences Between Stakeholder Groups

Participants showed:

- Higher satisfaction with the new moisture policy (4.5 vs 4.0)
- More focus on convenience and accessibility issues
- Greater concern about camp-level education challenges
- Strong desire for expanded geographic coverage

Leads showed:

- Higher operational awareness and site management concerns
- More focus on policy enforcement and after-hours issues
- Greater resilience mindset despite challenges
- Multi-year commitment and program ownership

Notable Patterns & Trends

1. **Weather Impact Was Universal:** Both groups cited 2025's unprecedented rain and wind as the primary challenge, yet the program persisted successfully
2. **Strong Future Engagement:** High interest in continued participation and expanded involvement from both groups
3. **Education Gap at Camp Level:** While leads and active participants understood protocols, broader camp populations needed clearer, simpler guidance
4. **Transportation Infrastructure Matters:** Participants with camp vehicles/art cars found participation easier than those relying on bikes or wagons
5. **Policy Change Success:** The shift to accepting all moisture levels was clearly positive and removed a significant participation barrier

Recommendations for Future

1. **Expand Infrastructure:** Support 2-3 additional strategically-located collection sites to serve outer sectors
2. **Integrate Education and Perks for Drying:** Develop a fun system to celebrate the people who properly dry their food scraps (to motivate others to do so) and educate those who don't, to prevent a "race to the bottom" of no effort to dry scraps resulting in amassing too many wet food scraps and increasing MOOP risks.
3. **Enhance Educational Materials:** Fund development of professional camp signage templates, visual guides, and pre-event training videos
4. **Weather Contingency Equipment:** Invest in tarps, covering systems, and weather-resistant drying infrastructure
5. **Extend Operating Hours:** Budget for Monday collection to accommodate strike schedules
6. **Communications Campaign:** Support BMIR PSA series and broader community education about proper drop-off procedures

Overall Assessment: The 2025 Black Rock Compost program demonstrated strong operational success and stakeholder satisfaction despite extreme weather challenges. With targeted improvements in geographic coverage, educational materials, and timing flexibility, the program is well-positioned for expanded impact in future years.

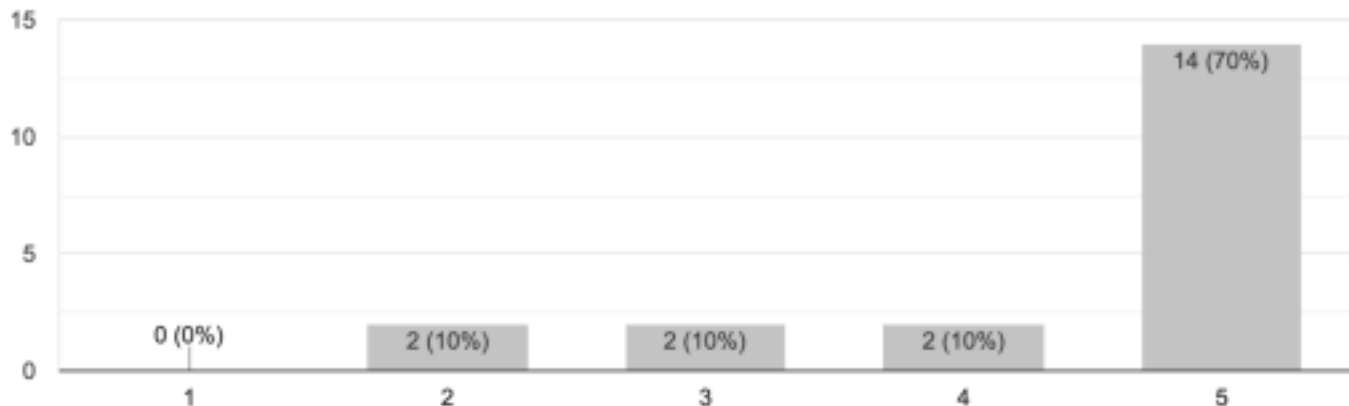
Appendix:

A. Select Survey Results:

[Survey Link](#)

Did our new policy of accepting all food scraps at every moisture level make your experience better?

20 responses



(Optional) Please share any additional feedback about your experience with the new policy of accepting all food scraps.

9 responses

WE dried the hell outta our scraps and were grateful that when we dropped them off at GYST, they said we were the first ones to really get it right and that our effort "restored their faith in humanity."

We still did our best to try everything and take up the challenge to make it as dry as possible, which I think puts more self responsibility on camps, unless passing the Buc to the compost organization. Like in real life getting some skin and effort in the game is important and hopefully skin without food stickers. which continue to be a challenge for people in our camp lol

We are a small producer and we dry our scraps, so it doesn't affect us much.

Very helpful towards the end of burn week when time is running out to dry properly

kinda made our whole drying process useless

Did you attempt to dry your food scraps?

20 responses



Why or why not?

20 responses

We received feedback that our first batch was too moist/could be drier

Im used to it from the last years we're a big camp

I know that drier scraps are preferred

Trying to find the best way to dry

We composted all of our 1800 coconuts. TBH leaving them out for a few days to dry was just easier all around (bring the over in one go, ensure they're a bit lighter and drier)

Becuase you asked us to! And we're in the desert so its easy enough with a small amount of thinking

we thought we were supposed to

One of our camp members made drying racks specifically for compost.

Better to handle when dry

We always dry our camp scraps

I dried my scraps in 2024 and 2025 as best we could

We believed the scraps needed to be very dry in order to be accepted by a compost camp, we also understand the purpose of dry scraps to reduce waste.

We have 3 years of experience now and it wasn't all that hard besides the rain. It just made for a bigger compost delivery at the end of the week.

What motivated you to compost on playa this year?

17 responses

Reno drop-off options dried up.

BM is such a big carbon and plastic/styrofoam sinkhole that it just felt like the least we could do to mitigate some of our impact. It was not easy to pull off and not all of our leads were down with it but we did it dammit, which was one of the highlights of my burn (which tells you more than you need to know about how my burn wasn't the best but so be it - we composted!)

I am motivated to not only reduce the waste that goes into the garbage in our camp so that we don't have an obscene amount of garbage to take out at the end of the week for 100 people but also to make sure that we are leaving no trace and reducing our impact on the globe our communities and the Playa.

BM principle and less camp moop

lessen amount of trash to take out of playa, help community, eco-friendly

We have done it for the last three burns, it's just the right thing to do.

We had a fuck ton of organic waste last year

Inner urge. Playa name is grandmaster trash 🤔

Less MOOP to pack home, and sustainability goals

Reduce landfill waste and create useful byproduct

Reduce landfill

Get rid of our food waste

We compost every year

To be part of the burning man sustainability solution

we always compost on playa (ok 15 out of 23 burns since 1992 probably)

Our camp wanted to reduce as much waste as we possibly could this year, many of us compost in our default lives, as well.

keep stink out of our trash and be able to provide compost for the community!

B. List of 2025 Black Rock Compost Camps:

2girls1camp

Acrobatica Galactica AerialKnotics

AmaZone placed at 4&A Android Oasis

Apotheneum

Arrow dynamic

Art Haus

Ashram Galactica

Astro Shack JaVa JoINt BAAHS

Back Rock Yacht Club BBBASS

Beats and Deets

Berlin

Best Year Yet

Deep C

Delapuenta

DinerTown

Dinertown	Oral Fixation
Disco Lips	Paillettes c
Disco Space Shuttle	Paper Cran
Down Low Cllub	Partner Da
Duane's Whirl	Pink Lightn
Duckbutt	Pinky Swea
Dusty Dreamers	Pinwheels
El Bondi	Playa Pent
ELEMENTUM	Playafire
Enchanted Booty	Playasophy
Forest Entheos	POC Camp
FAFA Camp	Polaris
Feed the Artists	Polaris

Beverly Grillz
Bisous
Black rock academy
Black Rock City Passport Office
Black Rock Desert Migratory Bird Refuge

Black Rock Sauna Society Blazing Death Ship
BRC Municipal Pool
BRCP09
BRTA
Bubbles & Bass
Bumblepuss
Bureau of Erotic Discourse (B.E.D.)

Burning Sensation
Burning Ship
Cafe Diem
Camp Armageddon
Camp Beaverton
Camp Connection
Camp Contact
Camp EQ
Camp Good Question Camp Orange
Camp Seem to Leave Camp Soft Landing
Camp Starstruck
Camp with no name
CampCareFree
Camposanto
Castra Ursi
Catmandu
Celestial Alchemy
Celestial Bodies
Celestial Sideshow 8&A

Fermented Re
Flybynyte
Fruitpop

Funk pirates	Rabbit Hole
Future Turtles	RADICALC
Gauchos del Fuego	Ranger Ou ("Old Ice" is sub-camp)
GlamCocks	Religious A
Golden Guy Alley	Reverbia
grilled cheese experiment	Rise
Guano Loco Lounge	Rogue Rat
GYST	Rumor Mill
Hand Lovers Lounge	Sandy Taco
HeeBeeGeeBee Healers	Scotch and
High Maintenance Entertainment	Sharkey's P
Home Grown	Sloth Sinem
Hot Ass Trash	Snugz
In Queso Emergency	Sonic Soul
Inappropriates	southern di
Intergalactic	Sphynx Du
It Was Better Last Year	Spice N vic
Kaleidoscope	Star warras
Kaleidoscope Collective	StarFist
La Calaca Village	Sundowner
Land of Monkey	Sundowner
Lands Beyond	tac-o-cat
Lazy Skool Daze	Tacoma is t
Lingerie Lounge	Teddies
Loadie Camp	The French
Lotus Dome Buddha Camp	The Glam C
Lusty Chanterelle	The Gong S

luvclub
Maxa Camp
Mayan Warrior
Maybe Bike Re

- Chez Mirage
- chicken ranch
- Children of the Abyss Cirque Du Sol Risers
- CloudyAF
- CocoDisco
- Cold Yogis
- collective mayhem
- Comfy Cozy Community College
- Cosmic Giggles
- COSMICA

Melt

C. Printable Resources: attached to email

D. Photos:

Memento Mori	Tierra Bom
MESA	Toxic Disco
Milk and Honey	Unauthoriz
mirage garage	Vault 21
MythMaker	Vessels of
Native Solidarity Project	Vulcan Emp
No Drama Camp	Waffles & F
Nose Flsh	We don't ha
NPE	Wrongtown
	Y Knot Salo
	Yaass Dad











