

BUSINESS

# Fort Worth recycling company goes wild



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Delivery of manure from Dallas Zoo. (Courtesy Silver Creek)

## What's the value of poo?

A lot, or at least that's what officials at a Fort Worth recycling, composting and mining company believe after announcing a partnership with the Dallas Zoo that will result in a product called Zoo Poo.

The cost for a bag of Zoo Poo? That has yet to be determined, but Silver Creek Materials, a 40-year-old recycling company, announced the partnership Monday to convert tons of herbivore manure annually into a rich organic compost branded with the Zoo Poo name.

“We’re very excited about this program,” said Jennifer Lutz, business development manager at [Silver Creek](#). “It is a unique opportunity to hit consumers at a lot of different levels, whether you’re looking at just the patrons that are coming into the zoo that are interested in sustainability and they’re interested in conservation, and some of the commercial landscapers.”

The idea for the partnership dates back to 2019, but plans slowed down because of the pandemic.

“Last year, we did about a million pounds, just right over a million pounds of the herbivore manure that came to us,” said Lutz. “This year in 2022, we’re hoping to have 2 million pounds come to us. so that we can get this on a widespread availability level for things like parks, other institutions, other big properties.”

Lutz also sees an educational component to the product if it is used in school environments. Educational institutions can use the products to teach students about recycling and compost, she said.

“We have a multi-spoke approach to marketing this product,” she said.

Zoo Poo will be available at the [Dallas Zoo](#) gift shop, local specialty stores and [Silver Creek Materials](#) in west Fort Worth.

The primary source material? Silver Creek is making Zoo Poo from the manure of the Dallas Zoo’s resident elephants, giraffes, hippos, and other herbivores. The manure, with its

mixture of hay and bedding material, creates a composted blend for potted

plants, gardens and landscapes. Despite its source material, there is no manure smell due to the composting process, according to Silver Creek officials.

“Each year, our herbivorous animals like elephants, giraffes, and okapi produce more than two million pounds of manure,” Gregg Hudson, Dallas Zoo’s president and chief executive officer, said in a news release.

The Dallas Zoo has a goal of diverting 90 percent of its waste from landfills by 2030 as part of its commitment to sustainability. Animal manure is the heaviest part of waste generation at the zoo. Silver Creek Materials says it will take 100 percent of herbivore manure from the Dallas Zoo beginning this year. A portion of Zoo Poo sales will benefit international wildlife conservation organizations supported by the Dallas Zoo.



An elephant at the Dallas Zoo. Courtesy of Dallas Zoo.

“Silver Creek Materials has been committed to recycling for nearly 40 years, and this partnership with the Dallas Zoo deepens that promise to our environment,” said Robert Dow, who founded Silver Creek in 1983.

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Entrepreneur Dow started Silver Creek in 1983, with an initial purchase of five acres from his grandfather fronting Silver Creek Road in west Fort Worth. Now that original five acres is just the entry point for a 600-acre multi-purpose, environmentally protected area. Silver Creek Materials is now a large-scale composting facility and quarry with a focus on reducing materials going to landfills.

Inbound products are then used to manufacture 100% enriched organic compost, mulches and soil mixes. The company's compost has been awarded the Seal of Testing Assurance from the [U.S. Composting Council](#) and is approved by the [Texas Department of Transportation](#). Silver Creek recycles tons of aluminum and plastic annually, according to the privately held company.

The company's operations are overseen by Dow as board chairman, and his son, Marshall, as chief executive officer. Silver Creek employs about 130 workers.

Silver Creek's location in Fort Worth puts the company at the center of one of the fastest-growing areas in the country.

"We love our location," he said. "It gives us a great area to be able to be the front runner and in a lot of cases, the low-cost bidder for trucking on how can we get organic materials, landscape soils, and mine materials, to sites in Fort Worth."

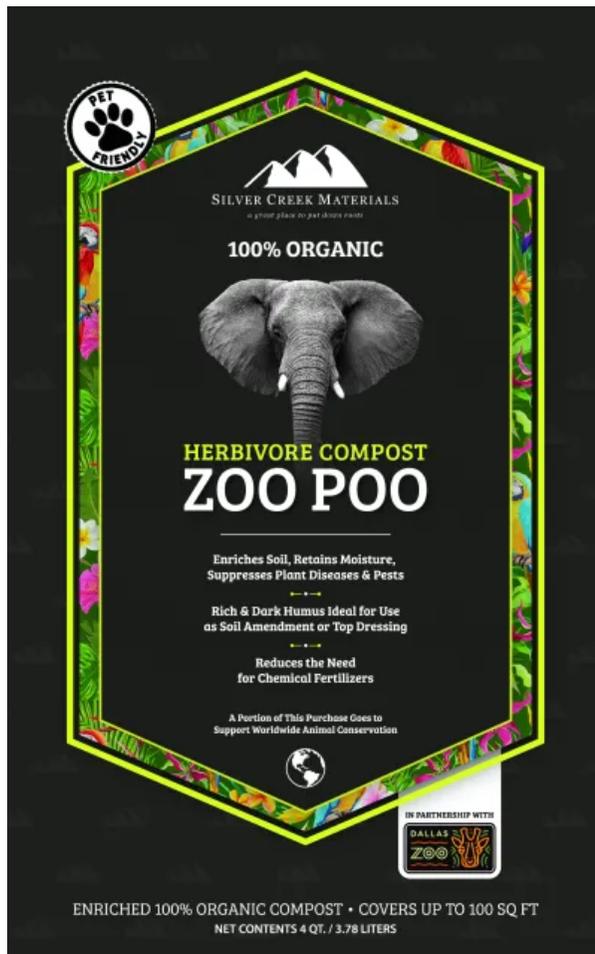
Dow also says that Silver Creek has a saying: All roads lead to Silver Creek.

"Because almost every single road or pathway that comes to us in Fort Worth has been ... built on Silver Creek materials," said Marshall Dow.

"My dad is a horticulture major from Texas Tech," said Dow. "They eventually started digging some of the sand on what was on the family ranch. "My dad with his horticulture background became really passionate in the early ;90s about composting and continuing to make good products, diverting things out of the landfill. What was our kind of mom and pop, sand and gravel company turned into a full scale composting facility, recycling operation and ... facility for recycling."

While Silver Creek typically deals with providing materials for construction, the Dallas Zoo partnership provides an opportunity to raise recycling awareness.

"My dad, Robert, says that anybody can put mulch on their yards, put mulch around their trees, but it's a really cool



Zoo Poo label. Courtesy Silver Creek

thing to complete the “Lion King” circle of life and be able to put real Zoo Poo manure compost onto your yard,” said Marshall Dow. “And we just thought that was a really fun deal and a fun opportunity to get people excited about it is the first step through to awareness. We want to do that with some fun branding and this fun partnership with the Dallas Zoo.”

Silver Creek has a one-year exclusivity deal with the Dallas Zoo on the current product, but is open to partnering with other zoos or wildlife parks in the future.

Zoo Poo will be available this month at the Dallas Zoo gift shop (4-quart and 1-cubic-foot bags), local specialty retailers (1-cubic-foot Bags) and at Silver Creek Materials (1-cubic-foot bag or bulk).

The Fort Worth Zoo works with Republic Services, a company that picks up animal waste from the zoo and sends to Living Earth to be recycled.

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