

Some Thoughts on WTE Perceptions

ACCO Managing Waste Workshop
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What Folks are Saying

- “WTE is the most environmentally friendly destination for urban waste that cannot be recycled...reduces GHG and local pollution but also yields copious amounts of electricity” – U.S. EPA (2009 Study)
- “If the goal is GHG emission reduction then WTE should be considered as a policy under U.S. renewable energy policies” – U.S. EPA (2009 Study)
- “The environmental and public health benefits of WTE far outweigh transporting trash to landfills” – Director, Waste Reduction & Management Institute
- “It’s time to see waste as a resource not a problem” – UK Confederation of Business (2010 Report)

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What Folks are Saying

- “Incinerators are really the devil...once you build a WTE plant, you then have to feed it. Our priority is pushing zero waste” – NY PIRG
- “WTE is a serious threat to public health...produces more carbon dioxide than coal power” – Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives
- “WTE is a glorified trash incinerator that would discourage recycling and spew hazardous pollutants into the air” – Maryland environmentalist
- “Not in my backyard” – American people



WTE – U.S. vs. Europe

United States

- 300 million people
- 87 trash burning power plants
- Majority built at least 15 years ago

In New York City

- 20% recycling
- \$300m spent sending trash to other states
- Send 10,500 tons of trash/day to NJ, OH and SC

Denmark

- 5.5 million people
- 29 trash burning power plants serve 98 municipalities
- 10 planned or under construction

In Horsholm

- 61% recycled
- 34% incinerated
- 4% to landfill
- 80% of heat/20% electricity generated



Connecticut



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Rhode Island



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The Current Environment

- Rhode Island seeks 100 acre expansion of Johnston Landfill
 - Will run out of landfill space in 2-3 years
 - “It’s got to be done” – Head of Rhode Island Resource Recovery Corp.
- Chestnut Hill Bio-Energy Terminates Plans for WTE Facility in Waterbury, CT
 - Company seeking to build nation’s largest food waste-to-energy facility looks for another site rather than engage in dogfight with community
 - “We want to be here, but we don't want to be in the middle of the garbage capitol of the world, and thank God it's not coming to Waterbury” – Local resident



The Current Environment

- Alliance Federate Energy announces Plasma Gasification “Project Apollo” for Milwaukee, WI
 - \$250 million project, 250 construction/45 full-time jobs
 - “We are pleased that AFE has selected Wisconsin for their first renewable energy project,” said Wisconsin Governor Jim Doyle. “This technology has real potential to help us address the growing need for clean renewable power. Project Apollo will create new clean energy jobs in our state, reduce the need for continued landfilling of our wastes, and reduce greenhouse gases”
 - “The technology has never been successfully deployed in the United States and the pollution that could be emitted is very troubling. It could also inhibit recycling and other waste reduction programs” – Wisconsin Sierra Club



The Current Environment

- Collier County, FL seeks to double height of existing landfill
 - Would add 15-20 years more life to facility
 - No new landfill permits in Florida for many years
 - “The board has said that (WTE) is not where we want our strategy to be focused around because of the cost and perception of environmental (impacts)” – Collier County Solid Waste Management Director
- Lee County, FL wins WTER “2010 Sustainable Waste Management Award”
 - “I would find it difficult to argue that using waste energy is not a better method of waste disposal than landfilling” – Lee County Solid Waste Division Director



Europe

- Lack of dump space a key factor in driving WTE
- As signatories to Kyoto Protocol, must reduce GHG produced at landfills
- Regard garbage as a clean fuel alternative
- Communities vie to have WTE facilities built
- Reduce energy costs and reliance on foreign oil
- WTE seen as benefitting environment, diminishing use of landfills and cutting carbon dioxide emissions
- Has become mainstay of garbage disposal and a crucial fuel source



United States

- WTE plants have not caught on because:
 - Abundance of cheap landfills
 - Fear of undercutting recycling
 - Negative public perceptions
- Incinerators got a terrible reputation in the 1980s and have yet to recover despite technology advancements
- Even those public officials that support WTE are often constrained by the political fallout – real and perceived
 - Mayor Bloomberg of NYC lists Denmark's WTE on list of environmental "best practices" but has not proposed any facilities to combat the city's trash problems



Denmark



England



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THANK YOU

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