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Windshield Surveys: What are they and how can they be useful?

What are Windshield Surveys? Stated simply, they are observations made through the windshield of a car. These surveys are useful when you want a regional analysis of a particular subject. For example, local governments and nonprofit organizations typically rely on this method of data-gathering to assess housing conditions. They map out a community to

study and drive around in a vehicle to observe certain housing characteristics and problems. Surveyors normally tally the number of houses in the sample and the percentage of houses that have a predefined characteristic. For a recycling survey, we are interested in the number of homeowners who filled bins with recyclable materials and placed the bins at the curb for collection.

As a part of the Authority's long-term waste study for Frederick County, five windshield

surveys were conducted, one for each day of the week. The Authority sampled five different regions of the county: Middletown Limits, Brunswick Limits, Frederick City Limits, Ballenger Creek Area and Thurmont Limits. Browning Ferris, Inc. (BFI) of Hagerstown, Maryland is the

hauler for curbside pickup in Frederick County. Phil Harris, Superintendent of the Department of Solid Waste Management for the County, helped plan a meeting with the supervisor of BFI, the County's contract collector, at which Authority staff learned which driver they would be following on his or her route for each day of the week.

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Harford Retrofit Construction Update

The Authority's air pollution control retrofit project continues to progress toward the November deadline for completion. Major accomplishments during the past few months include the setting of the scrubber and the scrubber inlet duct. These pieces are the tallest of the retrofit installation and took special handling to install. The pictures below chronicle the single largest crane lift of the project. In order to place the top piece of the acid gas scrubber in its final location, a 500-ton crane was brought onto the site. Using the crane to lift such a large piece enabled construction of the penthouse to take place near the ground, which is not only safer, but easier. The contractor took only twenty minutes to lift the 46-ton piece into place, then spent the next few hours welding the scrubber pieces together before releasing the cables from the crane. After the piece was in place, the tallest piece of ductwork was installed. This duct carries the flue gases from the plant into the top of the scrubber where the cleaning process begins. This work was started at 7 a.m. on a Saturday to take advantage of calm wind conditions, minimize interference with the operation of the facility and limit the number of people working in the area of the crane.

The electrical contractor has been on-site since early June running the wiring to power the retrofit as well as provide control capabilities. The lime preparation system has been delivered and installed. This system combines hydrated lime and water to make a slurry mixture. This slurry is injected into the top of the acid gas scrubber. The lime reacts with the acid gases to neutralize them. The water in the slurry also helps to cool the flue gases prior to their going to the bag-house where particulates are removed.

Startup of the equipment is still targeted for September with project completion prior to the November 5 deadline.



The top of the scrubber is lifted from the ground where it was fabricated.



The scrubber continues its ascent.



The inlet duct sits atop the scrubber. Adjacent to the stair platform is the lime preparation system.

The Truth about Trash

By: Christopher E. Nelson, Authority Summer Intern



While it might not be everyone's idea of fun to visit a landfill, talk to the staff at a transfer station, or follow along as sanitation teams collect other people's trash, that's exactly what noted *Washington Post* columnist John Kelly did for a series of articles on waste disposal and recycling efforts in suburban Washington.

In each of five articles in the series, Kelly focuses on a different facet of the waste disposal process. In his first installment, "Answer Man: What's the Dirt on Trash?" Kelly responds to a reader's question about the eventual destination of our trash, informing readers that waste disposal is a more complex process than simply picking up trash and taking it to the county landfill. Said Kelly, "One of the reasons I wanted to do the stories was to show the creativity and professionalism that go into making the stuff that we throw away go away."

Throughout the series, Kelly tells the stories of the people behind the waste disposal process, along with stories about the things people throw away. In an effort to understand the complete picture, Kelly follows along as Montgomery County crews collect trash, interviews staff at the Shady Grove Transfer Station and the Montgomery County Resource Recovery Facility. He describes the various ways in which trash can be disposed of, informing readers that trash can be buried, burned, or recycled. He also clearly defines the roles of transfer stations, landfills, and resource recovery facilities.

Again, what struck Mr. Kelly while seeing the waste disposal process up close and personal was the level of professionalism he witnessed day in and day out. Kelly remarked, "I'm sure that's not the case all over the country, or even all over this area. But around Washington, local

governments take trash very seriously and really attack it with military precision, from collecting it to recycling it to disposing of it."

The commitment to responsible waste disposal is important because, as Kelly notes in one of his articles, the Washington area produces close to 4.5 million tons of trash a year, creating an urgent need to get more people actively engaged in recycling programs. The Environmental Protection Agency has set a national goal of 35 percent recycling program participation rate by 2008, and articles like Mr. Kelly's help push us steadily toward that goal.

(The *Washington Post* articles were published May 23 – 27, 2005)

Compost Technology Tour

On July 12 – 14, the Northeast Maryland Waste Disposal Authority lead a three-day tour to Oregon and Washington to study Aerated Static Pile (ASP) technology for the composting of yardwaste. The group visited Rexus Sustainable Solutions in Eugene Oregon, Cedar Grove Composting and Seattle University in Seattle, Washington.

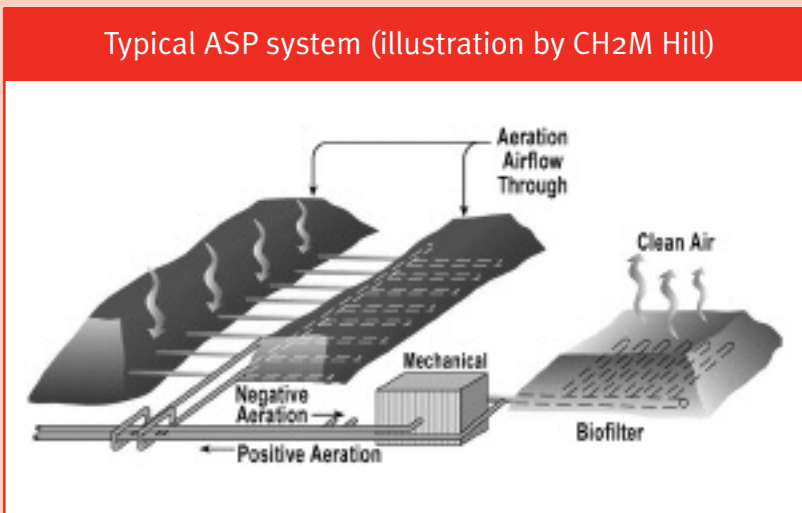
The Authority's on-call engineering firm evaluated increasing yardwaste processing at the Western Branch Yardwaste composting facility. The facility, located in Prince George's County, currently uses windrow technology for the composting of yard waste. The Authority's consultant recommended "a next step up" in technology from the current windrow system to an ASP system.

ASP systems use piping and fans to force air up (positive aeration) or pull air down (negative aeration) through the pile of material to be composted. The forced aeration allows for more rapid decomposition of the material and better oxygen and temperature control during the composting period. Negative aeration provides for the control of odors

produced during the composting process. Odors are piped through a biofilter constructed out of pine or hardwood mulch. Bacteria in the biofilter consume odors generated during the composting process before the air is released to the atmosphere.

The tour participants met with operators of the three facilities that employ ASP systems, and each provided operating lessons and experience. Environmental agency personnel which regulate the Cedar Grove site spent time with the participants to provide the compliance history. The participants gained a greater understanding of the ASP system and learned how the technology could improve the Western Branch Facility.

Typical ASP system (illustration by CH2M Hill)



2005 MRC Conference Highlights

The Maryland Recyclers Coalition's (MRC) 17th Annual Conference was held at the Community College of Baltimore County's Catonsville Campus on June 8th and 9th, 2005. For the first time, the MRC and the Mid-Atlantic Chapter of the Solid Waste Association of North America combined efforts to sponsor a single conference. The resulting 2-day meeting provided attendees with a broad and deep series of sessions and the opportunity to learn from a large cross-section of the solid waste industry in Maryland. Organizers drew on the combined resources of each group to attract a broad spectrum of exhibitors to the Conference, giving attendees access to vendors and service providers from inside and outside Maryland.

The conference got under way with a keynote address by Robin Davidov, Executive Director of the Northeast Maryland Waste Disposal Authority. Ms. Davidov gave an insightful address to the Conference participants on the value of risk-taking in waste management. Citing the book *Blue Latitudes*, by Tony Horwitz, Ms. Davidov noted that, in spite of great risk to himself and his crew, Captain Cook circumnavigated the globe three times, mapping over two-thirds of its uncharted surface. She challenged participants to step outside their comfort zones and accept some risk in order to achieve greater results for their agencies and companies.

Concurrent with the technical sessions presented on the first day of the Conference was a SWANA training pro-

gram on waste screening at municipal solid waste management facilities. After the opening plenary session, the MRC held its annual awards presentation where Anne Arundel County, the Authority and Sierra Student Coalition of Frostburg State University were recognized for their recycling efforts in 2005.

Topics throughout the day included landfill design, increasing diversion rates, organics recycling and special waste issues. A highlight session at the end of the day pitted a hauler, a processor and a county employee against each other in a free-for-all discussion about recycling collection, processing and contract management. Participants left the session with a better understanding of the "other side" as well as a few good stories!

Thursday morning, day two of the conference started with concurrent sessions: a recycling market update; a mercury lamp recycling workshop; and current topics in landfill gas-to-energy. The morning ended with a panel discussion exploring new ways to divert more cost effectively, and the many hurdles that must be overcome to continue to increase diversion in the waste stream.

For more information on the Mid-Atlantic Chapter of SWANA please go to: <http://www.swana-midatl.org/>
For more information on the MRC, including presentations from the Conference please go to: <http://www.marylandrecyclers.org/presentations.htm>

Authority Wins MRC Award for Best Market Development Program

In the last issue of WasteWatch, the Authority's redesign of the mdrecycles.org website was described ("mdrecycles.org Gets Major Makeover," Spring 2005). In addition to the redesign, the Authority worked with its new communications consultant, Pinnacle Communications Resource Company, to launch a comprehensive media campaign to promote the website.

At the Maryland Recyclers Coalition (MRC) annual conference held last month, the Authority received the MRC's "Best Market Development Program Award." Robin Davidov accepted the award on behalf of the Authority, stating that the Authority is pleased to receive this recognition of its efforts to increase commercial recycling in Maryland.

Windshield Surveys: What are they and how can they be useful?

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BFI was very cooperative in helping the Authority conduct the study. John Schott, Chris Nelson and Amanda Ohler from the Authority each participated in following the trucks and compiling the data. With the use of counters, Authority staff tracked how many houses were on the route and how many of those houses had recyclables set out. The team also recorded the times that the trucks left the station, started the route, finished

the route and arrived back at the station. After the trucks were weighed, the team recorded the weights to calculate the amount of paper and commingled material that was collected.

Next, the Authority will compile and analyze the data and recommend ways to increase household participation in the County's curbside recycling program.



MRC Award

Authority Welcomes New Board Members *Evans and Harkins Recently Appointed*

J. Michael Evans

Mr. Evans previously served on the Authority's board from 1996 through 1999 as Carroll County's member representative. In 1999 he left Carroll County government and for the past five years has been the Director of the Department of Inspections, Licenses and Permits for Howard County. Mr. Evans returned to Carroll County in May to serve as Director of the Department of Public Works and was recently appointed to the Authority's board by Governor Robert Ehrlich.



J. Michael Evans

Mr. Evans is a 31-year veteran of county public service, having worked in Anne Arundel, Carroll and Howard Counties. As public works director, he is responsible for the design and operation of county buildings, roads, utilities and solid waste facilities. A

graduate of the University of Baltimore, he holds a bachelor's degree and a master's degree in business administration.

James M. Harkins

On July 1st, James M. Harkins was appointed Director of the Maryland Environmental Service (MES) by Governor Ehrlich. By virtue of his position as director of MES, Mr. Harkins also serves as an *ex officio* member of the board. Mr. Harkins replaces John Sparkman who resigned in June.

Mr. Harkins was elected as the fifth County Executive of Harford County in December

1998 and was reelected in November 2002. Before his tenure at Harford County, he served two terms in the Maryland House of Delegates. Mr. Harkins is also a twenty-five year veteran of the Harford County Sheriff's Office.

The Authority worked with James Harkins in his capacity as Harford County Executive on the Harford Waste-to-Energy Facility purchase in 2002 and more recently on the air pollution control retrofit of the same facility. "We have tremendous respect for Mr. Harkins," said Authority executive director Robin Davidov, "and we look forward to working with him in his new role."



James M. Harkins

Jurisdictions to Institute Permanent eCycling Programs

Electronic material (ie: computers, monitors, televisions, printers, power cords, etc) is becoming a large part of the waste stream, especially since technology is improving rapidly. Many citizens find themselves upgrading to better equipment and having a stockpile of old electronics in their basement. Now there is good news for the Authority's member jurisdictions; permanent electronic material collection and recycling services (eCycling) will soon be available to each member jurisdiction.

Before the Authority conducted a procurement to obtain electronic material

collection and recycling services, the jurisdictions submitted a survey detailing their historical eCycling dates, pounds collected, and the number of citizens who participated. From the survey, it was obvious that permanent and convenient eCycling services were needed.

It is important to keep electronic material out of the landfills. Broken monitors and televisions contain hazardous material and should be handled with care for human and environmental safety. Out-of-date computers can often be refurbished and reused. eCycling is a

relatively new concept, but an important way to increase recycling.

Links to eCycling vendors and local government recycling offices can be found at www.mdrecycles.org or by calling 410-333-3066.



Redesigned mdrecycles.org a Hit With Users

The Authority's mdrecycles.org website design was upgraded by Pinnacle Communications Resource Company last April. The Authority staff is very pleased with the change and committed to keeping the content of the site accurate and up-to-date.

Pinnacle provides the Authority with a monthly statistical report that gives an analysis of the number of visitors mdrecycles.org receives, how users are getting to the site, and the most

frequently requested pages. The Authority has received reports from March through June. The importance of this analysis is to measure the usage of the site from month to month since it was redesigned.

The Authority is seeing progress with the number of hits the site receives. This means that more people are aware of the site and continue to show an interest in commercial recycling in Maryland. The recycling directories are the

most popular pages visited, proving that the redesigned site is easy to navigate.

As time goes by and the website gains more exposure through the Authority's media campaign, we expect to receive additional feedback from visitors and users. Please visit mdrecycles.org for your recycling needs. If you have comments or questions regarding the site, send them through the "Contact Us" section of the website or send an e-mail to Shirl Wright (swright@nmwda.org).



REDUCE...
REUSE...
RECYCLE



WASTEWATCH

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