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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

WATER & WASTES DIGEST is published exclusively for the 90,000+ decision makers in the municipal and industrial water, wastewater and water pollution industries. These individuals actively design, specify, buy, operate and maintain the equipment, chemicals and services used for water treatment. Editorial content in this audited publication highlights new products and literature concerning the supply, collection, treatment and distribution of drinking water; the collection, treatment and disposal of wastewater; and hazardous waste pollution control. Regular Product Emphasis and High-Tech Focus sections feature major equipment and systems. A product directory is included in the annual June *Buyer's Guide*.

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Energy Talks … But Who is Listening?

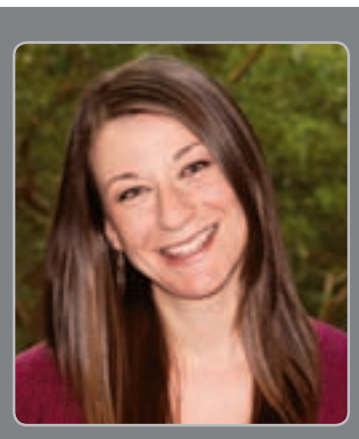
Other than the presidential elections, energy efficiency has taken center stage. In the last month alone, I have seen at least a dozen special reports on everything from climate change policies to fuel-efficient cars and even organic milk—which as advertised on the carton, uses 100% clean wind energy to produce its products.

It is certainly a "green" fever of sorts to which the water and wastewater industry is not immune, either.

It is not just the green trend, however, that has raised energy awareness. Rising energy prices have pressed wastewater facilities to turn to renewable energy solutions.

According to the U.S. EPA, energy accounts for 30% of the operating and maintenance costs of most wastewater treatment plants and demand for electricity is only expected to grow in the next decade.

Technological advances are also making strides in this green field. Today, more resources than ever are focused on the development of wastewater treatment solutions and alternative energy resources.



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The Water Environment Research Foundation's *State of Science Report: Energy and Resource Recovery from Sludge* said, "Sustainable wastewater treatment, with a reduced carbon footprint, is now becoming a goal of technical exploration and experimentation. The view of municipal sewage has shifted from waste to be treated and disposed of, to a resource that can be processed for recovery of energy, nutrients and other constituents."

The U.S. has 16,500-plus wastewater treatment facilities and produces 6.5 million tons of dry solids annually, according to the report. Currently, less than 10% of sludge is being reused—45% goes to combined disposal (incineration and landfills) and 49% goes to land application.

While the interest in capturing renewable energy at wastewater treatment plants will continue to grow, energy efficiency doesn't come cheap. In order for wastewater plant managers to turn to renewable energy solutions, the energy recovery technology must not only meet newly mandated environmental initiatives, but it must be affordable as well.

With lack of funding looming, it may be difficult for some municipal water and wastewater facilities to implement the technologies that can actually help them plug the energy hole that currently drains their municipal budgets.

On the flip side, there may be some legislative help on the way. Last August, the U.S. House of Representatives passed a broad energy package that includes authorization for a $10-billion energy block grant program for cities, counties and states.

The new grant program will be established by the U.S. Department of Energy and will provide grants for communities to develop energy efficiency strategies to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Until then, wastewater plant managers should keep their ear to the ground for new energy mandates, and if new renewable energy technology is not yet in their budget reach, they should be prepared to at least inspect their facility and identify areas of inefficiency.

COMING UP NEXT MONTH...

- Grumbles on Water
- Plant Profile
- SBRs
- Sampling & Analyzing Equipment
- Infrastructure Management & Maintenance
- Aeration
- Treatment Systems & Chemicals