



April 16, 2009

Editor  
Waste & Recycling News  
1725 Merriman Road  
Akron, Ohio 44313

Dear Editor,

Neil Seldman's guest column on waste-to-energy in the June 8th edition shows a commitment to recycling---that is the recycling of twenty-year old arguments that opposition groups frequently use to take aim at waste-to-energy. His arguments are antiquated and specious, and expose a predilection to oppose waste-to-energy for any reason. Rather than opposing waste-to-energy facilities, a constructive dialogue should highlight how waste-to-energy plants facilitate recycling, reduce greenhouse gases, increase renewable electricity generation, and promote a culture of treating waste as a resource rather than detritus.

Opponents of waste-to-energy want people to choose between recycling and waste-to-energy, despite the fact that numerous studies have shown that they are compatible. In fact, a study<sup>1</sup> released this month by Eileen Berenyi explores this very topic and concludes that communities that rely on waste-to-energy have recycling rates higher than the national average. Let's not forget that waste-to-energy facilities recover and recycle more than 700,000 tons of ferrous metals each year that would have been lost forever if landfilled. Far from being a domestic phenomenon, many countries that exhibit the highest recycling rates worldwide rely on waste-to-energy to manage the waste that cannot be recycled to keep it out of landfills. Increased waste-to-energy usage has resulted in increased recycling rates, reduced greenhouse gas emissions, and less dependence on fossil fuels.

Waste-to-energy is an important tool to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The ability of waste-to-energy to prevent greenhouse gases on a lifecycle basis and mitigate climate change has been recognized in the actions taken by foreign nations trying to comply with Kyoto Protocol targets. The German Ministry of the Environment published a report in 2005 which concluded that the use of waste combustion with energy recovery coupled with the reduction in landfilling of biodegradable waste will assist the European Union-15 to meet its obligations under the Kyoto Protocol. In addition, researchers at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and North Carolina State University published a paper<sup>2</sup> this year which identified municipal solid waste as a viable energy source in a carbon-constrained world. Furthermore, the World Economic Forum this year in its much

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<sup>1</sup> "A Compatibility Study: Recycling and Waste-to-Energy Work in Concert. A 2009 Update." Eileen Butler Berenyi June, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> "Is It Better to Burn or Bury Waste For Clean Electric Generation?" P. Ozge Kaplan, Joseph Decarolis, Susan Thorneloe, *Environmental Science and Technology*. 2009.

anticipated Davos Report identified waste-to-energy as one of eight emerging clean energy technologies, along with wind, solar, geothermal, and next generation biofuels.

For decades, policymakers have recognized that recovering energy from municipal solid waste is a prudent and judicious use of resources. In the United States, waste-to-energy has been a recognized as a renewable resource as far back as the Carter administration and as recently as President Obama's signing of the stimulus bill in February. Along with numerous federal actions, many states have enacted statutes and policies that promote the recovery of energy from waste. These policies acknowledge that after efforts to reduce, reuse, and recycle, there will be trash that must be managed and waste-to-energy is the most effective way to recover energy from waste.

Serious efforts to increase recycling rates must be made. However, it is clear that for the foreseeable future, we will have waste that must be managed and real world problems require real world solutions. New waste-to-energy plants must be promoted to manage the waste that will inevitably be produced, while generating homegrown renewable energy, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and lessening the nation's use of and dependence on fossil fuels.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Ted Michaels".

Ted Michaels  
President  
Energy Recovery Council