PO Box 422 ■ Tamworth, NH 03886-0422
www.nebiosolids.org

phone 603-323-7654
fax 603-323-7666
info@nebiosolids.org

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North East Biosolids & Residuals Association
Cooperatively promoting the environmentally sound recycling of biosolids and other residuals

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Contact: Ned Beecher, NEBRA, 603-323-7654, ned.beecher@nebiosolids.org

New Data on Biogas Production at U. S. Wastewater Treatment Plants

Today, the North East Biosolids and Residuals Association (NEBRA) unveiled a new website that provides updated data on anaerobic digestion and biogas production at wastewater treatment facilities across the United States. The website, www.biogasdata.org, provides policymakers, market analysts, project developers, and water quality professionals with key information about the potential for biogas production as a renewable fuel. Biogas can be used in place of natural gas in boilers and engines to produce heat and electricity.

The data, which build on U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) data, show that the wastewater solids (sludge) from more than 1200 U. S. wastewater treatment facilities undergo anaerobic digestion and produce biogas. Almost all of this wastewater biogas production occurs at facilities that treat from 1 to hundreds of millions of gallons per day (MGD) of wastewater. However, two-thirds of these 3300 major facilities do not send solids to anaerobic digestion and produce biogas. In addition, there are more than 13,000 minor facilities (less than 1 MGD in size); a small number of these operate anaerobic digesters. There is clearly potential for considerably more biogas production from wastewater.

The use of biogas at wastewater facilities is also under-developed: the data show that one-third of the treatment facilities that produce biogas do not put it to use for energy, and only about 300 use it to generate electricity. The EPA, other policy makers, and renewable energy developers are enthusiastic about the potential for reaping more energy from biogas, thus displacing reliance on fossil fuels.

The new website presents data collected over the past year by a team of biosolids and biogas organizations across the country. Seed funding for the data collection was provided by the Water Environment Federation. Funding for the initial website development was provided by Cambi, the New York State Energy Research & Development Authority, and the National Biosolids Partnership, with significant in-kind contributions by project team members, including American Biogas Council, Mid-Atlantic Biosolids Association, NEBRA, Black & Veatch, and 350 Technologies.

“The goal was to develop and present a consensus-driven data set – data that everyone in the field could rely on,” said Lori Stone, Global Practice and Technology Leader at Black & Veatch, one of the principal investigators on the project. “It took hundreds of phone calls to wastewater treatment

facilities to ensure the accuracy of the data. The teamwork made the daunting task more manageable."

"This field has needed quality, shared data," said Ned Beecher, Executive Director of NEBRA, co-principal investigator. "The data we present today are not perfect, but they are a major step forward. And, thanks to 350 Technologies, we now have a central web-based platform for biogas and biosolids data that we hope will be expanded and improved over the years, through the same collaboration."

NEBRA is a 501(c)(3) non-profit professional association advancing the recycling of biosolids and other organic residuals in New England and eastern Canada. Black & Veatch is an employee-owned, global leader in building Critical Human Infrastructure™ in Energy, Water, Telecommunications and Government Services. 350 Technologies provides expert clean-tech advice, products, and services, including database and website development for green technology.

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