

THE EVOLUTION OF THE MID-ATLANTIC BIOSOLIDS (MANAGEMENT) ASSOCIATION
Comments to the New Jersey Water Environment Association
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Introduction

All-leather interior, multi-disk CD player, moon roof..... Is there anyone in the audience who wouldn't like a Lexus ES 300?

Question: What is the difference between a Lexus and biosolids?

Answer: Utilities don't feel the need to advertise how special their product is.

Why, if everyone would like this Lexus, did Toyota Motor Company's Lexus Division Corporate Marketing Manager spend more than \$25 million to "launch" this vehicle in 1997? The advertising campaign designed by Team One agency won the Advertising Marketing Effectiveness International's automotive division national award for the "The Road is Calling" campaign, featuring fully integrated TV, print, outdoor, interactive, event and direct marketing elements. Why, if everyone wants a Lexus, does the company spend literally thousands per car to advertise it? Why does the Lexus Division sponsor the Lexus Centre for the Performance Arts and the Lexus Challenge Golf Tournament? Why do they sponsor web sites for 160 dealers? Why are there regional associations of Lexus dealers? Why is there such a group as the "International Automotive Advertising Agency Association" organized to give Lexus an award for its advertising campaign.

All of this is by way of introducing the REAL question:

Why, if the public really doesn't care too much for biosolids, has it taken us this long to recognize we need to organize our industry to promote standards and public acceptance?

Let's Get Organized!

Why not a biosolids association?

Organizing around common interests is the most natural of human activities. As a resident of Philadelphia, I could join the Bustleton Somerton Townwatch; make a local call to the Austrian Sea Coast Beneficial Association; talk to members of the Compressed & Open Air Caisson Subway Underpinning Foundation & Tunnel Local Union No 420; attend a meeting of the Lithuanian Republican Beneficial Club; check on the membership of the Malt Beverage Distributors Association of Pennsylvania; picket the offices of the Philadelphia Trial Lawyers; and lend support to the National Association to Aid Fat Americans. **People associate around any and all conceivable areas of common interest, so why do we resist organizing around biosolids?**

Why not a Mid-Atlantic association?

Many people organize within a geographic region, such as the Mid-Atlantic region. We have the: Mid-Atlantic Power Supply Association, Mid-Atlantic Opel Association, Mid-Atlantic Association of ORACLE Professionals; Mid-Atlantic Association for School, College and University Staffing; Mid-Atlantic Association of Craft Brewers; Mid-Atlantic Association of Forensic Scientists, Mid-Atlantic Association of Professional Employers; Mid-Atlantic Home Based Business Association; Mid-Atlantic Fiber Association; Mid-Atlantic Marine Education Association; Mid-Atlantic Venture Association; Mid-Atlantic Food Processors Association; Mid-Atlantic Petroleum Distributors' Association; Mid-Atlantic Region Shoot to Retrieve Association; Mid-Atlantic Collegiate Rowing Association; Mid-Atlantic Soaring Association; Mid Atlantic DX and Repeater Association; Mid-Atlantic Open Database Association; Mid-Atlantic Hound Association. **Doesn't Mid-Atlantic Biosolids Management Association have a nice ring to it?**

Public Perception and the Lonely Operator

Dazzle... Excitement... Pizzazz... FLASH!!!

Wastewater Treatment...????

If the average operator's talent lay in promotion and sales, then would he not be in the advertising business instead of wastewater? I suspect few of us in biosolids are, at heart, inclined to self-promotion. But we need to fight this genetic predisposition. Why do we need to escape the loneliness of our plants?

Consider these observations:

1. The public has no understanding of wastewater treatment and regards sewage as "pollution."
2. The public, if asked, would probably express a poor opinion of wastewater profession (could it be!!!).
3. The wastewater profession does not reach out to the public, neither through WEF, nor NJWEA; their focus is on professional development.
4. Biosolids opponents may sound extreme to us, but, to an unformed, skeptical public, the wise personal action is to believe the opponents.
5. The biosolids profession's nose has not always been clean, and some authorities have acted in ways that have not built public trust--the "pimple on the ass of biosolids progress."

The bottom line is this: **We have given the public no good reason to believe and trust us!**

Sadly, anti-biosolids groups embrace the nervous public in its search for the "truth" about biosolids. Consider these anti-biosolids organizations: National Sludge Alliance, Pennsylvania Environmental Network; Citizens Clearinghouse on Hazardous Waste; Center for Media and Democracy; Cornell Waste Management Institute; Pennsylvanians Against Sewage Sludge. These are just the few I can think of off the top of my head. These groups reach out to the concerned public, and they offer advice and hope for alleviating fears. They also offer companionship, as they are willing to travel, across state boundaries, to lend their support, as we have witnessed in Pennsylvania with Mr. Kaufmann coming out of Washington and Ms. Hartmann coming down from New York.

You are making excellent effluent, but who knows about it? You are keeping impeccable records, but who gets them?. Your telephone is silent, and you quietly count your blessings that no one is calling to complain about your biosolids. But is this an adequate basis for your utility's public acceptance program? And, if you did get an angry call, would you be equipped to handle the issues confidently and capably?

Don't be lonely any longer. Join a local biosolids support group!

Join the MID-ATLANTIC BIOSOLIDS MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION!!! Well, not yet, but soon!

We Are Launching from a Foundation of Experience

The Mid-Atlantic association is making a great start. And, it is not starting from ground zero. We have the support of EPA and the formidable experience of the Northwest Biosolids Management Association to back us up.

1. The success of Northwest utilities in overcoming the Zander hurdle and implementing its Mountains to Sound program has been compelling.
2. The NBMA video tape promoting biosolids is a "classic" for its use of environmentalist and scientists to support biosolids.
3. The WEF Communications Plan promotes local and regional organizations using the NBMA as a model, and the Plan provides a foundation for the Mid Atlantic's public outreach program.
4. EPA has provided funding to the NBMA for organizing regional groups and several individuals from the Mid-Atlantic attended, and they helped inspire the first meeting in August in Philadelphia at the WEF Residuals Specialty Conference.
5. The NBMA staff and one of its members, Pete Machno, from King County Metro, have provided substantial guidance and information.

Progress on the Mid-Atlantic Association

We Do Not Yet Have a Name

First, a candid admission. The Steering Committee has been split down the middle on what the name of the organization ought to be. The two candidates are:

Mid Atlantic Biosolids Association, or MABA

Mid-Atlantic Biosolids Management Association, or MBMA

We have, so far, refused to let this inability to reach consensus interfere with progress on other fronts. That's why you see us use: Mid-Atlantic Biosolids (Management) Association, or MAB(M)A. Pretty awkward, but fair.

We Have Solicited Interest in the Association

We have a current mailing list of 147 people, with broad industry representation and wide geographic distribution. Persons from Washington, both the state and district, advised us to try to organize within a geographical region congruent with EPA Regions. With substantial trade in biosolids between Regions 2 and 3 and with similarity in technical and political issues, organizing these two regions together seemed sensible. Our reach is, thereby, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland and Virginia.

We Set Up a Steering Committee

The first organizing meeting of the Mid Atlantic association was held in August, in Philadelphia, at the time of the WEF Specialty conference. The inspiration for this meeting was the enthusiasm of several folk who attended the training session on regional organization in Seattle, in June 1997.

We Have Held Meetings

Subsequent meetings were held in January, February and April. A total of 45 have attended one or more steering committee meetings. Steve Gerwin, of the Washington Sanitary Suburban Commission Meetings, has chaired the meetings. They have been held at different locations to help spread the difficulty of the travel more evenly. Thanks to Steve's talents, the meetings have been promptly started and ended, and have been notably productive. Additional meetings are scheduled for May 21st in Philadelphia, and July 23rd in Maryland.

We Have Developed Priorities

The focus of the first two steering committee meetings was on gaining approval for an organizing statement of Mission, Vision and Long Range Goals. A statement was approved in February with consensus of the steering committee. You will find these at the end of the paper.

A second priority for the steering committee was to advance formation of the association by defining membership classes and the structure of the association board. These tasks were assigned to bylaws and membership committees. A draft set of membership classes and bylaws have been complete.

The issue of membership was a key one. The steering committee decided, by a strong majority, that the biosolids association ought to be a professional organization made up of organizations and businesses with concern for biosolids. Individual memberships would not be offered. After grueling discussion, membership was divided into five classes: public owners of biosolids facilities, private owners of biosolids facilities, business members (e.g., service companies and consulting engineers), alliance members representing other professions, such as environment and agriculture, and associate members from government and academia. The associate members would be non-voting and non-dues paying.

A third priority was to make the association legitimate by setting up an Interim Board of Directors that would be empowered by the steering committee to adopt bylaws and to incorporate the association. A

nominating committee was set up to undertake this tricky task. Its deliberations were made particularly complicated by the fluid nature of the membership classes at the time.

We Have Selected an Interim Board

Setting up an organization has a "chicken and egg" quality to it.... How can you have a board without first having an association, and how can you have an association without first having a board? The nominating committee presented to the steering committee at the April meeting a slate of organization representatives. They considered geographical distribution, utility size distribution, and the number of active candidates in each class. The committee offered 14 nominations for the interim board, 9 public, 2 private and 3 business. The emphasis was on having a board with a strong core of public facility members. These nominations were accepted by consent of the steering committee. Up to eleven slots remain available on the board, in accord with the draft bylaws. Further appointments will be made by the new interim board.

We Have Fashioned Draft Bylaws

Draft bylaws for the new organization have gone through at least three iterations. Marie Kruzan and I have spearheaded this effort, drawing upon the Northwest Biosolids Management Association and the New England Biosolids and Residuals Association bylaws as models, and on other organization bylaws.

Several issues are fundamental to properly defining the organization.

The first issue stemmed from the fundamental nature of membership. If membership is by organization, the new association will be a professional organization.

The second issue arose with defining membership classes. Here the issue is how to distinguish among the large varieties of potential participants. Even after much conversation, the steering committee concluded overlap will be unavoidable. Take, for example, the firm that operates a biosolids processing firm in one state, but is only a land applier in another state.

Tied to the question of membership classes was a concern for how those classes would influence dues structure, a third issue. Dues structure and financial concerns are the topic of another ad hoc committee.

The fourth issue was how to proceed to incorporation. At Marie's suggestion, our nascent organization will be joining the Center for Non Profit Corporations. This group will provide low cost, yet specific advice, on how to proceed to making bylaws final and to submitting papers for incorporation. Upper most in our association's mind will be how to structure the organization's tax status so as to avoid future issues with potential members and contributors. One key decision, and one that was not a true consensus, was that the association would avoid all appearance of lobbying and directly influencing legislation.

We Have Assigned Subcommittee Tasks

The mission at this point is to develop a list of tasks for priority attention and begin pulling together some meaningful products. In that way, we will have an organization that we can really sell to our future membership. Here are our committees and volunteers:

1. By-laws: Marie Kruzan (908-722-7575) and Bill Toffey (215-685-6248)
2. Fee Structure: Mary Pat Robbie (609-265-5021), William Dunn (609-267-0015) and Wayne Schutz (717-566-3237 x312)
3. MAB(M)A Web Site Development: Bill Toffey (215-685-6248) with Bob Martire (412-734-8742)
4. Spokesperson List: Barb Petroff (717-263-6299) and Jane Forste (410-224-0022)
5. Biosolids Conference for September 1998: Wayne Schutz (717-566-3237 x312)
6. Research Activities and Priorities: Linda Hardy (732-721-3800)
7. Biosolids Fact Sheets: John O'Neal (610-486-0365)
8. Key Organization Survey: Trudy Johnston (717- 763-7211, x2372)
9. Nominating Committee for Interim Board: Barb Petroff (717-263-6299), Diane Garvey (215- 412-4955), John Brossman (717-263-6299), Bob Pepperman (410-744-3561), Tom Ferrero (215-646-2142)
10. Facilitator: Steve Gerwin (301-206-7580)

11. Secretary: Marie Kruzan (908-722-7575) is preparing minutes of the meeting, distributed to our entire mailing list.

Next Steps

We are proceeding steadily along. The next steps include these:

Complete the Board

The Interim Board is expected, at its next meeting of May 21st, to consider nominating committee recommendations for additional interim board members.

Dues Structure

The Interim Board will consider a proposal from the Steering Committee dues committee on a dues structure for the different membership classes. This will be probably modest fees for all organizations, but with suggested voluntary contributions based on size of production, in the case of public and private facilities.

Membership Drive

The hope of the board is for broad membership from all biosolids recyclers and affiliated business organizations. A membership drive will need to be put into full motion as soon as incorporation is accomplished. This drive will, of course, provide us funds for operation.

The Real Work

The Interim Board will keep its subcommittees in operation. The objective is to pool resources of active members to develop work products of value to present and potential members. These may be a Biosolids Conference in State College, a Web Site, public relations kits, a speaker bureau, a resource library, an operators' bulletin board. The second objective is, truth be told, to test the commitment of our board and membership to put in real work for the benefit of the group.

Issues on the Horizon

Conflict with WEF and State MAs

Regional biosolids associations have raised fears in the minds of the Water Environment Federation and some Member Associations that we will be competing for money and membership. My personal opinion is that the need for investment in a professional biosolids association and public outreach is so vast that, were organizations at all level working as hard as they could at what they do best, many needs will still be unmet.

The WEF is good at working the national agenda level, and MAs are good at working with operators in their states, but neither embraces all of the disciplines we need in the biosolids industry, and neither is particularly good at public outreach.

I ask you to please call me with any rumors or conversation you may overhear that alleges that regional biosolids associations are hurting the MAs or WEF. I need to be part of those conversations, so they don't win an unearned credibility by going unchallenged.

Conflict with NBP

The NBP is the National Biosolids Partnership. Some concern has been raised that the movement toward regional biosolids associations will undermine the inertia building toward the collaboration between the WEF and the Association of Metropolitan Sewerage Agencies in forming the NBP. I argue that the greatest hope the NBP has for success is if regional associations are founded simultaneously to help implement the NBP program. Almost every element of the proposed NBP program, whether the "good practices manual," the "environmental management system," or the new communications plan, will

require local implementation. That's where we will come in. We can do the local component of the national program.

Competing Demands

For many of the potential members of the Mid Atlantic association, biosolids is just one of an array of issues. Why isn't membership in just one organization, say the NJWEA, enough? How can a manager justify making payments to so many different organizations?

This is a valid concern. Our response will be in trying to always keep a clear view of the products and services that the MAB(M)A is providing in return for its membership fees. If these are given quicker and better than available through other organizational avenues, the value of membership will be clear and justifiable.

And, getting back to the opening question... ought we not be trying to raise the commitment of funds from the industry to build public acceptance? So, the answer is: yes, we will be asking utilities to cough up new funds for a new effort. But the effort should pay back handsomely. Even if the result of a public campaign is to reduce the cost of biosolids handling in the country by 1 percent, would that not be about a \$10 million dollar savings to biosolids generators?

Conflict between Participants

Oh, how prejudices run deep and old attitudes die hard! The small utilities are afraid the big ones will throw their weight around. One consulting firm's feelings are hurt that they aren't on the board when a competitor is. Pennsylvania utilities are worried that New York biosolids will raise a local "stink" when transported to Pennsylvania.

But, in the famous words of Benjamin Franklin at the signing of the Declaration of Independence, "We must all hang together, or assuredly we shall all hang separately."

Indeed, a fundamental mission of the Mid-Atlantic association is to break down barriers that have prevented us from finding common ground and approaches in the past.

Keep Our Sights on the Goal

Our vision is to cooperatively foster public understanding and environmentally sound management of biosolids.

PARTICIPATION IN THE MID-ATLANTIC BIOSOLIDS MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION						
	Total	Public	Private	Business	Alliance	Associate
The Universe	1000s	1000s	dozens	100s	dozens	dozens
Mailing List	147	61	10	48	11	17
Steering Committee	45	21	5	15	2	2
Interim Board	14	9	2	3		
Recommended Board	Up to 25	12	3	3	3	varies

Public Publicly owned biosolids processing facility
Private Privately owned biosolid processing facility
Business Commercial business
Alliance Environmental, agricultural or other NGOs
Associated Regulator, academic, research members

Mid-Atlantic Biosolids (Management) Association

MISSION: To cooperatively foster public understanding and environmentally sound management of biosolids.

VISION: The MABA is a solution oriented organization, providing technically sound information, leadership, and coordination in the field of biosolids management. The MABA advances environmental stewardship through the practical utilization of a valuable resource and furthers the inclusion of biosolids use in the recycling ethic.

LONG RANGE GOALS:

Coordinate a regional voice for communicating philosophy and practices to enhance biosolids management in the Mid-Atlantic Region.

Provide continuing education and information sharing opportunities for members and interested stake holders.

Effectively disseminate biosolids management information to members, regulators, public officials, key professionals, and the public.

Equip members to participate in the development and implementation of laws, regulations and guidelines

Support and participate in research related to biosolids management.

Develop alliances with key environmental and professional organizations.