

ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

INFORMATION PACKET

FOR

January 19, 2012



ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES REPORT

January 19, 2012

Ponderosa Landfill

- Annual Report due January 31
- eGGRT Annual Report to the EPA regarding landfill gas due February 28
- Upcoming Permit cycle – due within the next year or so
 - Permit
 - EAW
 - CON
- Stormwater and Access Road construction project
- Stormwater Compliance Issues
- Gas Well Repairs
 - One gas well damaged by compactor
 - One gas well hit by tractor
- Litter issues
 - Assistance from STS crew
- Bulky Waste prices
- CAR – not eligible
- Public Service Building – time frame

Solid Waste/ Recycling

- Waste Pharmaceuticals program
- SCORE Report
- Solid Waste Management Plan
 - Due 2013
 - Work with Tri-County South

Household Hazardous Waste

- Closed Until April
- Summary Data Reported
- Will complete safety re-routing this spring

Miscellaneous

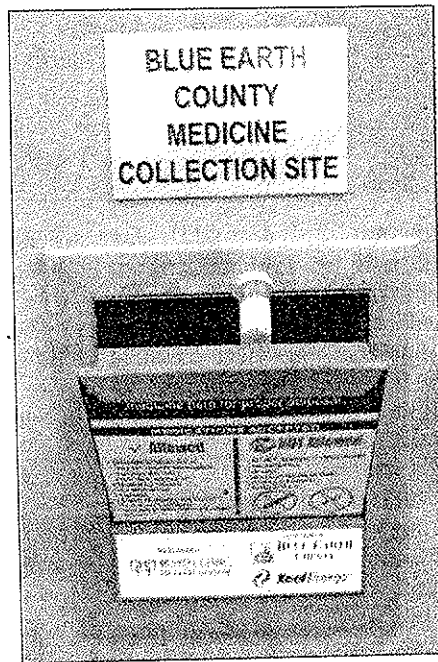
- Shoreland Buffer Initiative
- City View Code Enforcement
- MPCA Complaint Letter on Rapidan
- Land Use Ordinance Update
- County Web Site Update

NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING – March 15, 2012

Information Articles

The Mankato Free Press	Drug drop-off now permanent
Lake Region Times	New Permanent Medicine Collection Program Available to the Public
The Mankato Free Press	Drug drop-off a good solution
The Mankato Free Press	Medicine collection program is popular

The Mankato Free Press	Bright Spot: Holiday lights recycling serves two purposes
The Mankato Free Press	Plastic recycling to grow in Mankato
The Mankato Free Press	From trash to treasure
The Mankato Free Press	Prairieland trash to be trucked to Mankato, burned at Wilmarth
The Mankato Free Press	Giant mound of tires in S. C. visible from space
Star Tribune	\$30 million green-power plant headed for Le Sueur
Waste and Recycling News	Agilyx turns plastics back into crude oil
Waste and Recycling News	Turning waste into high-end shoes
The Mankato Free Press	Gustavus lays plans for composting grant
Star Tribune	Corn Plus admits faking pollution data
Star Tribune	More cities ban driveway sealer cited as pollutant
Star Tribune	Recycling Goal isn't so easy
Star Tribune	Recycling becomes a growth business
The Mankato Free Press	Green hotel plan grows next to River Hills Mall
The Mankato Free Press	County now takes paper and plastic
The Mankato Free Press	BE County keeps levy flat in 2012
The Mankato Free Press	BEC approves County Rd. 26 improvement
The Mankato Free Press	State wants sewage situation remedied
The Mankato Free Press	Area communities ask state for help with sewer systems
The Mankato Free Press	City sells phosphorus pollution credits
Minnesota Counties	Straight pipe law working
Star Tribune	High crop prices threat to nature?
Star Tribune	River's revival is on the rise
Star Tribune	Growth in CO2 emissions last year largest ever
The Mankato Free Press	Science panel: Get ready for extreme weather
Star Tribune	Times are changing, bringing more Wild weather
Star Tribune	Study funded by skeptics finds global warming real
The Mankato Free Press	Climate Conference reaches deal
Star Tribune	5 things to know about the climate plan
Star Tribune	Forests are dying as CO2 spews into the air
Star Tribune	Days may be numbered for some coal power plants
The Mankato Free Press	Martin County power plant on shutdown list
Star Tribune	State: U.S. Steel plant can emit more mercury
Star Tribune	Plan would back off rules on smoke stack emissions
Star Tribune	Mercury in wildlife rises
Star Tribune	EPA clamps down on power plant emissions
Star Tribune	EPA suggests fracking-pollution link
Star Tribune	Is this the fix?
Star Tribune	Ethanol firm's next bet: Algae
Star Tribune	Better forecasts put more wind on the grid
Star Tribune	Old mine pits might help wind farms
Star Tribune	Wind farm tensions flare over eagle study
Star Tribune	Laws murky in battle over wind power



Dan Nienaber

Signs on a new drug "safe drop box" at the Blue Earth County Justice Center list items that can and cannot be deposited for incineration.

Drug drop-off now permanent

Receptacle for unused pills, expired medicines at Blue Earth Co. Justice Center

By Dan Nienaber
dnienaber@mankatofreepress.com

MANKATO — There's now a safe place to put leftover prescription pills, expired over-the-counter allergy medicines and even the white powdery substance that kid claimed to be holding for a friend.

Federal environmental tests have shown tossing those items in

the garbage or flushing them down the toilet are not the best options. The drugs don't break down in landfills or water treatment facilities, so they eventually find their way into our drinking water.

The best way to get rid of the drugs is to burn them. A new partnership between Blue Earth County and Xcel Energy will do that while giving residents a permanent place to drop off their old medications, vitamins or what they suspect are controlled substances.

Mayo Health System donated the money needed to install a secure drop box in the Sheriff's Department lobby in the Blue Earth County Justice Center. The

"safe drop box," which looks a lot like a library or movie rental drop box, is in the far wall of the lobby and accessible during regular business hours.

In the past the county's Environmental Services Department has hosted drug drop-off days at local drugstores. About 400 people turned out during four days in the fall 2009 and spring 2010. Nearly 600 pounds of medications were collected. It was a successful program, but the process turned out to be more costly and time consuming than expected.

Drug laws required a law enforcement officer to be present

Please see DROP-OFF, Page B3

DROP-OFF: Pull a door, drop in an open box

Continued from Page B1

at all times during the drop-off days. The Sheriff's Department also learned there were only a limited number of places where the drugs could be destroyed, the closest locations being in Missouri and Illinois.

"That's why Environmental Services stopped doing those remote collections," Sheriff Brad Peterson said. "One, it was time consuming. Two, where do you get rid of it? It's really convenient now.

"People can come in, pull a door open and drop (the drugs) into an open box."

Like a mailbox, people can drop drugs in but they can't take anything out. County employees are able to get into the box through a locked door on the other side of the wall. The door has two locks. The Sheriff's Department has one key and the Environmental Services Department has the other.

That way a deputy will be present to make sure the drugs don't end up in the wrong hands and an Environmental Services employee will be there to make sure items that can't be burned are removed. Needles, syringes, thermometers, IV bags, hydro-

gen peroxide and business waste are among the items that cannot be put into the drop box.

The collected items will be taken to Xcel's Wilmarth Plant in Mankato, which burns processed garbage to create electricity. They will be dropped into a chute that will go directly into an incinerator.

"Xcel has state-of-the-art pollution tracking, so they will keep track of everything," said Scott Fichtner, director of Environmental Services. "Incineration will destroy the chemicals. When you flush them down the toilet, they go into the water treatment plant, which can't flush them out of the system."

He's hoping the easy access to a drop box will encourage people to properly dispose of more unwanted drugs.

Dave Pearson, Xcel community relations manager, said his company is providing a worthwhile public service. The business and the county will see how the system works, then consider providing the incineration service, which required federal approval, to other communities.

"I've got to give it to the county for seeking this out," Pearson said. "It's really a good deal."

New Permanent Medicine Collection Program Available to the Public

The Blue Earth County Medicine Collection Program was recently launched to provide a secure, convenient and environmentally sound permanent solution for the disposal of unused, unwanted and out of date household medications. A permanent collection site drop box is available at the Blue Earth County Justice Center located at 401 Carver Road in the Sheriff's Office lobby. The public can utilize the drop box to properly dispose of household medicines during regular business hours, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

All prescription medications, over-the-counter medications, narcotics, controlled substances, medication samples, pet medications, vitamins, supplements and liquid medication (in glass or leak-proof containers in a plastic bag) are allowed. Those dropping off accepted items are asked to please remove as much packaging as possible prior to disposal, with the exception of items containing liquid.

Items not allowed in the drop box include, needles, syringes, other sharps, thermometers, IV bags, bloody or infectious waste, hydrogen

peroxide or any business waste.

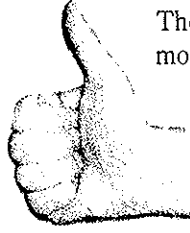
Unused medications should be disposed of properly to avoid a number of complications. Some possible risks of improper disposal include environmental and water contamination, accidental ingestion by children or pets and drug diversion. It is always good practice to dispose of unused or expired medications to avoid confusion and possible drug interactions with current medications.

Program partners include Blue Earth County and Xcel Energy. All medicines from the collection box will be taken by a Sheriff's Deputy to an Xcel Energy incinerator for proper disposal. Mayo Clinic Health System provided the secure drop box for the site.

For more information visit www.co.blue-earth.mn.us or call the Blue Earth County Environmental Services 24-hour Waste & Recycling Hotline at (507) 304-4242.

Drug drop-off a good solution

To a new partnership between Blue Earth County and Xcel Energy that gives residents a permanent place to drop off old medications, vitamins or what they suspect are controlled substances.



The Mayo Health System donated the money needed to install a secure drop box in the Sheriff's Department lobby in the Blue Earth County Justice Center.

The collected drugs will be incinerated at Xcel's Wilmarth plant in Mankato, which burns processed garbage. Incinerating the materials ensures that the substances won't enter the water system or leach out from landfills.

This permanent solution replaces periodic collections that the county coordinated at drugstores in which nearly 600 pounds were collected.

Giving area residents a set place to go at their convenience should encourage participation in the program. That will help us keep such substances out of the wrong hands and protect the environment.

Editorial board

The Free Press / Saturday, December 3, 2011

Medicine collection program is popular

MANKATO — Since early December, more than 140 pounds of unwanted, outdated or unused medications have been collected for proper disposal through the Blue Earth County Medicine Collection Program.

When the program was initiated about a month ago, it was anticipated the box might need to be emptied every month. The program has been well received with the collection box in need of emptying at least once or twice per week.

"We are extremely pleased with how well the permanent medicine collection program is being received," Recycling

Please see **COLLECTION**, Page B3

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Coordinator Jean Lundquist said in a statement.

"There is definitely a need for such a program and we hope that more and more citizens take advantage of this free, easy to access and safe resource for disposing of unused or out-of-date medications which in turn helps protect the environment."

The permanent drop box for the program is in the lobby of the Blue Earth County Sheriff's Office in the Justice Center at 401 Carver Road in Mankato and is open 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays.

All prescription medications, over-the-counter medications, narcotics, controlled substances, medication samples, pet medications, vitamins, supplements and liquid medication (in glass or leak-proof

containers in a plastic bag) are allowed.

Those dropping off accepted items are asked to remove as much packaging as possible prior to disposal with the exception of items containing liquid. Items not allowed in the drop box include: needles, syringes, other sharps, thermometers, IV bags, bloody or infectious waste, hydrogen peroxide or any business waste.

Unused medications should be disposed of properly to avoid a number of complications. Some possible risks of improper disposal include environmental and water contamination, accidental ingestion by children or pets and drug diversion.

Program partners are Blue Earth County and Xcel Energy. The secure drop box was provided by Mayo Clinic Health System.

BRIGHT SPOT

Holiday lights recycling serves two purposes



File photo

Desi Bartholmey (left) and Nicholas Dinesen removed bulbs from strings of Christmas lights in 2009 at MRCI's Highland work site. MRCI and the Recycling Association of Minnesota are working together in an effort to get people to recycle unused strings of lights.

Environment, MRCI workers benefit

By Dan Linehan
dlinehan@mankatofreepress.com

Your outdated or tangled holiday lights can go in the trash. Or they can go to a local collection site, where they're transported to MRCI. There, workers separate the bulbs from the wire and send the components off separately to be recycled with the money from the wire paying for the workers' wages. The glass, though not as lucrative to recycle, is converted into products such as shingles.

It's not as simple as a landfill, but the Recycling Association of Minnesota believes the program spares the environment while providing jobs for adults with disabilities.

Recycle Your Holidays, now in its third year, began earlier this month. It's a statewide program, but "everything is locally done," said Ellen Telander, the group's executive director. "The whole point is to provide green jobs in that particular community."

Where to drop off your Christmas lights

Blue Earth County
Government Center, 410 S. 5th St., Mankato
Arrow Ace Hardware, 201 N. Victory Drive, Mankato
Drummer's Garden Center, 281 Saint Andrews Drive, Mankato
Hilltop Florist, 885 E Madison Ave, Mankato
Hy-Vee (hilltop), 2010 Adams Street, Mankato
Any MRCI location
Hardware Hank, 165 South Park Ave. Le Center
Amboy Cottage Cafe, 100 East Main Street, Amboy
New Ulm City Hall, 100 North Broadway, New Ulm
Fleet & Farm Supply, 1175 11th Street South, St. James

In the case of south-central Minnesota, those lights go to MRCI, where workers recycled

8,641 pounds of lights in 2010. It kept workers busy from October through June, communications manager Matthew Coulsey said.

Statewide, about 200,000 pounds of lights were collected last year.

Arrow Ace Hardware in St. Peter is one of about a dozen dropoff sites in the region.

Owner Dave Neiman said they've already collected a garbage can's worth of lights.

"It was just a good thing for us to be doing," he said. "Anytime we can recycle, it's a better thing for us."

The transition from fluorescent light bulbs to LEDs (light-emitting diode) will result in energy savings, but LED lights are more difficult to recycle.

Telander said they'll still recycle LED light strings, but by collecting all of the fluorescent bulbs. They'll "eventually work ourselves out of a job."

Even if LEDs are harder to recycle "we want to encourage people to do the switchout because it's so energy efficient," she said.

Plastic recycling to grow in Mankato

Starting in January, residents can recycle types 1 through 7

By Dan Linehan
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MANKATO — Starting in January, Mankatoans will be able to recycle more types of plastic, from bubble wrap to fast food containers.

Waste Management, Mankato's hauler as well as the largest in the state, will be able to recycle plastic marked "1" through "7." Only the first two types are currently

recycled.

These numbers, called the plastic's resin identification code, is typically placed on plastics and enclosed with a series of clockwise arrows.

There have been two changes that make the recycling expansion possible, said Julie Ketchum, who works in government affairs for Waste Management.

First, there are higher and more

stable prices for different types of plastics. Second, the company has the technology available to retrofit its Twin Cities facilities.

Plastic bags and styrofoam are among the plastics that Waste Management still won't recycle.

The movement toward more recycling is a trend driven both by individual haulers and by the development of markets for used plastic, said Wayne Gjerde, whose job it is to expand recycling opportunities for the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency.

"As we dig deeper into the waste stream, a lot of people over the

years have said 'Hey, why can't we recycle this?'" Gjerde said. Allied, the state's second-largest hauler, is also taking steps similar to Waste Management's, he said.

What consumers can recycle depends largely on whether or not their hauler has found a market for it, Gjerde said.

In North Mankato, plastics marked 1 through 7 are already collectable, Public Works Director Rich Peterson said.

"The market has come back some in the past year," he said.

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Many of the area's smaller towns, such as Madison Lake, Janesville, Courtland, Nicollet and Eagle Lake, are serviced by LJP Waste and Recycling.

LJP President Larry Biederman said his company is looking to expand its recycling collection for residential customers, though the company's main focus is on industrial waste. That might, for example,

include bubble wrap, a type of polycarbonate represented on the resin identification code with the number "5."

Increases in the cost of petroleum make plastics recycling more lucrative because plastics are made from petroleum.

Another trend that works in plastics' favor is its light weight for shipping purposes.

"I don't even know if you can buy ketchup in a glass bottle," Biederman said.

The Free Press / Sunday, October 9, 2011

BRIEFS

Waste facility to close for season

MANKATO — The Blue Earth County Household Hazardous Waste Facility, 651 Summit Ave., is closing for the season at the end of October.

The facility offers free disposal for residents of Blue Earth, Nicollet, Sibley and Le Sueur Counties for a variety of household chemicals. It is open noon to 6 p.m. Tuesday afternoons. The facility will open again for the 2012 season Tuesday, April 2.

For more information, call 304-4242.

From trash to treasure

Recycling can be way to craft things of beauty



Photos by The Associated Press

This undated photo courtesy of Timber Press shows an image from "The Revolutionary Yardscape," by Matthew Levesque. This walkway is made from scrap steel plates and remnant cedar planks from a fence.

Economy forcing more people to be creative with yards

The Associated Press

Trash talk has helped Matthew Levesque fashion an inventive career in garden design.

He holds "creative reuse" workshops, and his "yardscaping" creations made from locally available items have become austerity-chic collectibles.

"I'm trying to get people thinking about alternative sources for their materials," said Levesque, author of "The Revolutionary Yardscape" (Timber Press, 2010). "Lots of landscape people are beginning to pay attention."

A slumping economy is forcing consumers to be as imaginative about finding landscaping supplies as they are about using them. Levesque is a master at crafting yard decor from cast-off materials that otherwise would stuff landfills or litter vacant lots.

He turns toolboxes into planters, and makes walkways from tumbled, recycled glass. He uses doors for fences and links small ceramic tubes into rain chains, a substitute for downspouts.

"It's the art of using what we've got," said Levesque, who also operates what he describes as a "thrill store for house parts" in San Francisco. "I use my garden as a test kitchen, trying things out to see if they work."

Ignore the cookie-cutter garden furnishings sold at big box stores and nurseries, Levesque said. Instead, reclaim building materials with recognizably local origins so you can make one-of-a-kind statements.



Matthew Levesque has used trash talk to fashion an inventive career in garden design, including writing this book, "The Revolutionary Yardscape."

"What is a flowerpot but a hole with a bottom and sides? Through reuse, a great many things can fit that description," he said.

Where should you look for reclaimable building supplies? Salvage yards are great spots to start, Levesque said.

"They generally offer goods at reasonable prices, and often the proceeds go to an affiliated nonprofit endeavor," he said. "This is a quick place to find beautiful old windows, doors, racks of sheet metal and other useful stuff."

And then there's snapping up materials considered waste by the companies that generate or handle them. That would include any company that makes, handles or processes things, Levesque said.

"When you are seeking materials,

this waste stream is an excellent place to wade in and start looking around," he said.

Patronize surplus sales, particularly at hospitals, universities and restaurant supply houses that build up large stocks of outdated equipment and gear.

"Of interest to the creative gardener and the landscape designer is the wealth of stainless steel implements, equipment and containers," Levesque said. "If durable and shiny are on your spec sheet, find the closest outlet and go shopping."

Clover Chadwick is a Los Angeles designer who, like Levesque, embraces recycling as a way to shape things of beauty. She collects discards to reuse as backdrops for weddings, store openings and other events. Chadwick's designs blend the economical, aesthetic and environmental.

"I like decorating with tires, box springs, whatever I can grab that's been abandoned on streets or back alleys," she said. "They're offbeat. People use them as inspiration for their own gardens and I sometimes land landscaping jobs because of them."

Reusing tires in floral arrangements has been a creative signature for years at her Dandelion Ranch design studio. She uses tires as hanging planters, and converts mattress box springs into wall cubicles for growing succulents or other low-maintenance plants. Pallets, cans, crates and air ducts also come into play.

"If it holds soil, we'll plant it," Chadwick said. "You see trash. We see garden."

Prairieland trash to be trucked to Mankato, burned at Wilmarth

By Brian Ojanpa
bojanpa@mankatofreepress.com

MANKATO — A Truman waste-processing facility is gearing up to send all its trash to Mankato, where it will be burned as refuse-derived fuel.

Prairieland Solid Waste Management Director Mark Bauman said in February or

March the Truman plant will be trucking up to 1,100 tons a month to Xcel Energy's Wilmarth power plant in Mankato.

Bauman said the recently finalized deal allows Prairieland to discontinue its composting operation.

The 20-year-old facility has been processing into compost much of its trash

from Martin and Faribault counties, but its aging composting equipment requires major rehabilitation costs.

"It's 20 years old and it's getting tired," Bauman said.

Since 1991, Prairieland has taken 30 percent of its waste and turned it into compost that was spread on farm fields, while remaining waste materials were

processed for burning at the Wilmarth plant or landfilled. to pieces no more than 6-8 inches long and wide.

Prairieland makes solid waste into fuel-ready components through a shredding process. One machine breaks down bulky waste, then a second shredder sizes it down further.

By the time waste is ready for trucking away to be burned, it has been reduced

Recycling, composting or burning waste is necessary because landfill space is limited and new landfills are rarities.

Prairieland was created after landfills in Martin and Faribault counties started becoming overcapacitated in the 1980s.

Giant mound of tires in S.C. visible from space

The Associated Press

COLUMBIA, S.C. — The sprawling pile of hundreds of thousands of tires isn't easy to spot from the ground, sitting in a rural South Carolina clearing accessible by only a circuitous dirt path that winds through thick patches of trees. No one knows how all those tires got there, or when.

But, Calhoun County Council Chairman David Summers says of this giant rubber menace, "You can see it from space."

Authorities have charged one person in connection with the mess of roughly 250,000 tires, which covers more than 50 acres on satellite images. And now a Florida company is helping haul it all away.

Litter control officer Boyce Till said he contacted the local sheriff and state health department, which is investigating who had been dumping the tires. But the worst possible penalty that could be imposed locally? A single \$475 ticket for littering.

Records show the property is owned by Michael Keitt Jr. of Far Rockaway, N.Y.

A phone number for Keitt could not be found, but local officials said the man was one of several heirs to the property, all of whom live out of state.

As part of the state Department of Health and Environmental Control's case, a state grand jury

issued indictments against George Fontella Brown, 39, of Easley, on three charges of violating the state's solid waste act, according to DHEC spokesman Adam Myrick. Those state charges carry much heavier possible penalties, including thousands of dollars in fines and up to a year in jail.

Myrick would not discuss details of the case against Brown, and a spokesman for state Attorney General Alan Wilson did not respond to messages. No working phone listing could be found for Brown, who also faces similar charges in Greenville and Orangeburg counties, and court records did not list an attorney for him.

Tire dumping has historically been a problem in Calhoun County and other rural areas, said Summers, who recalled another giant tire pile in the 1990s that would dwarf the current monstrosity.

"This tire pile here is a baby compared to what that one was," said Summers, who previously worked for a company that ended up shredding the used tires.

South Carolina retailers charge motorists \$2 for every new tire they buy, which helps pay for the cleanup and recycling of old tires. But Summers said many tires never make it to recycling plants, instead being discarded and growing into gargantuan piles.

For now, a Jacksonville, Fla.-based tire processing company is working to clear the pile.

\$30 million green-power plant headed for Le Sueur

◆ The “Hometown BioEnergy” project will take waste from the city’s foodmakers and turn it into fertilizer and energy.

By DEE DePASS
dee.depass@startribune.com

The city of Le Sueur is hoping to give a whole new meaning to the adage, “Love your vegetables.”

A new biofuel plant project is in the works that aims to cook corn, potato and melon waste from food processing plants until it turns into a remarkable trio — methane bio-gas that will be burned to create electricity; liquid fertilizer; and a solid debris that will be converted into burnable pellets.

The \$30 million project, called “Hometown BioEnergy,” will provide electricity to residents and businesses in Le Sueur, in south-central Minnesota about 40 miles southwest of the Twin Cities. It is the first commercial-scale project of its kind in the Midwest and is a fitting tribute to a town that used to be the headquarters of Green Giant vegetable products.

If approved, the energy plant will be built on a depleted gravel pit and boast 8 megawatts of electrical capacity, which could support about 4,000 homes and businesses. Planners expect the project will create 100 new construction and up to 15 permanent jobs at the facility. The jobs are expected to pay about \$70,000 a year, including benefits.

“These will be jobs of a technical nature and so will create decent living-wage jobs,” said Le Sueur Mayor Bob Oberle. “I am in the camp that is excited about this.”

If regulators approve the project, construction on a series of buildings,

\$30 million green-power plant for Le Sueur

◀ LE SUEUR FROM D1

giant tanks and kettles and cauldrons could begin next spring. The plant is expected to gobble 45,000 tons of agriculture waste a year to help power the town.

Avant Energy and the Minnesota Municipal Power Agency (MMPA) came up with the idea. If successful, the plant would burn the methane-based gas to create the electricity. From there, a liquid fertilizer byproduct would be shipped to local farmers, while the fuel pellets would be sold to companies looking for an alternative to coal for their furnaces.

The plant's concept, called "anaerobic digestion," is much better known in Denmark than in the Midwest. Avant and MMPA officials insist that if approved, the plant would not only create much needed jobs but also help local Minnesota utilities meet state requirements that call for more renewable energy.

"We are really excited about

it," said Avant Energy project director Kelsey Dahlen. "The business concept is unique to the Midwest and Minnesota and really the nation."

In the United States and in Minnesota, anaerobic digestion has mostly been used by dairy farmers who use manure to create electricity for their farm, according to the Minnesota Department of Agriculture. The proposed project in Le Sueur will only use plant waste and will be built on a commercial scale, meaning that it can feed electricity to an entire town, similar to those regularly used in Europe, Dahlen said.

Environmental air permits for the project were submitted to the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency on Wednesday. Land and other environmental permits are awaiting processing.

The electricity generated will be parceled out to area homes and businesses via small transmission lines. Local businesses slated to receive

ABOUT THE PROJECT

Summary: Hometown BioEnergy Plant would burn corn, potato and other agriculture waste to create electricity for the city of Le Sueur, Minn. Byproducts — liquid fertilizer and fuel pellets — would be sold to farmers and factories.

Developers: Avant Energy and Minnesota Municipal Power Agency will build the plant.

Cost: \$30 million.

Time Frame: Construction is to start in summer 2012; it should be operational six months later.

Jobs: Expected to create up to 15 permanent jobs and 100 construction jobs.

Status: Awaiting environmental approval from state and federal agencies.

electricity from the plant include the Cambria factory, the Davisco Foods plant, a greeting card company and a General Mills research facility.

The green project is the latest of many underway in Minnesota. While Hometown BioEnergy focuses on electricity, 21 Minnesota green-energy factories make ethanol. Another five make biodiesel fuel additives for trucks.

New projects are being

spurred thanks to federal tax credits that were restored in December. Last month, a soybean biodiesel plant reopened last month in Glenville thanks to those renewed credits. Other wind farm and solar energy projects pop up every year, as utility firms work to meet the state mandate to generate 20 percent of their energy from renewable sources by 2020.

Dee DePass • 612-673-7725

PRODUCT INNOVATION

Agilyx turns plastics back into crude oil

Company finds use for hard-to-recycle plastics

By Jeremy Carroll
WRN reporter

BEAVERTON, ORE. — When Lew Feucht sees a bag of potato chips, he doesn't see the salty snack inside the bag. He's see black gold, Texas tea, pure crude oil.

"Potato chip bags. Candy bar wrappers. The stuff that's contaminated, comingled and landfill destined. That's the stuff we like," he said sitting inside a conference room at company headquarters near Portland, Ore.

Feucht is an account manager for Agilyx, a start-up company that is turning waste plastic into crude oil to be sold to a refinery.

"We sometimes say we're bottom-feeders," he said. "It's the waste plastic that no one else wants or can do anything with."

Agilyx has designed a system to take shredded plastic, heat it to the point that it becomes a liquid, and then gasify it. The gas is brought back to a liquid in a condenser and turned into a mixture of water and crude oil. The process can take a 1,000-pound batch of plastic and turn it into crude oil in five hours.

The system is efficient, he said; it makes five BTU's worth of energy for every one BTU of energy used to process the material.

The company's small industrial facility in Tigard, Ore., can process 10 tons of waste plastic a day. A tanker picks up 9,000 to 10,000 gallons of crude oil every seven to 10 days.

While the system can take all types of plastics, Feucht said the company likes to avoid polyethylene terephthalate (PET or plastic code one) and high density polyethylene (HDPE or plastic code two) in favor of plastic codes three through seven, which are harder to recycle.

"We don't want to compete with the recycling market," he said. "We are going after the waste plastic that, at the end of the day, doesn't have a very valuable home."

Flexible packaging and plastic bags make great crude oil, he said.

There are all different types of streams that work in the system, including leftover plastic from car shredding, commonly referred to as auto fluff. The leftover plastic from electronic waste can be run through the system as well.

According to the U.S. EPA, 31 million tons of plastic waste was generated in 2010, with only 8% of that recycled.

"Landfill operators hate plastic," Feucht said. "They get paid by the ton. And plastic is low weight but high volume. So they get the least amount of money and it fills up their landfill faster."

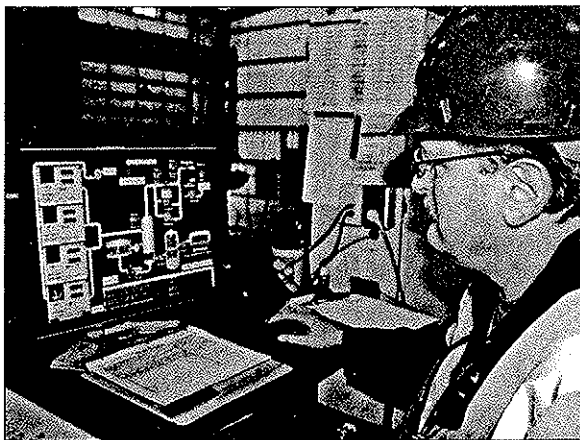
Founded originally as Plas2Fuel Corporation, Agilyx changed its name and opened its 10-ton-per-day demonstration facility in April 2010.

Agilyx has more than 55 em-

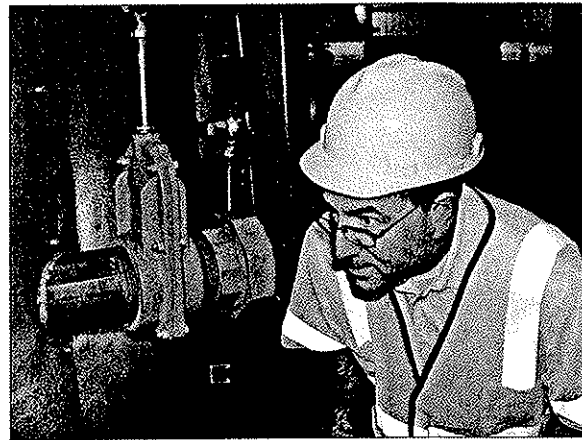


Lew Feucht, account manager for Agilyx, picks up a handful of shredded waste plastics. The company is turning the plastics back into crude oil through a gasification process at its plants in Oregon.

Photos: Jeremy Carroll, Waste & Recycling News



Jeff Fery, shift supervisor for Agilyx, monitors the progress of the gasification process on a nearby computer. After the plastics are gasified, they are condensed back into crude oil.



Lew Feucht, an Agilyx account manager, looks to make sure the flame has been lit for a batch of waste plastic. The system can turn the plastic into crude oil in approximately five hours.

ployees. It grew out of the small office space in the Tigard plant and has recently moved into office space in nearby Beaverton.

The company is looking to sell the technology to material resource facilities or other locations that have uses for it. The cost for a 20-ton system is between \$4 million to \$5 million.

A 20-ton-per-day facility can produce 118 barrels of crude oil per day. At \$85 a barrel, that equates to \$3.3 million a year.

"We are trying to give this industry a new profit stream," Feucht said. "We want to go where the plastic already is."

The company has been boosted by \$28.7 million in venture capi-

WRN multimedia

Watch a video of Beaverton, Ore.-based Agilyx, a company that turns waste plastics into crude oil.

wasterecyclingnews.com



tal, including money from Waste Management Inc.

Kleiner Perkins, one of the largest venture capital firms in the world, has also invested in the company.

Wes Muir, spokesman for Waste Management, said Agilyx has developed very interesting conversion technology that appears to have a lot of promise and be commercially scalable.

"It has the ability to address the issue of hard-to-recycle plastics," Muir said. "Here's an opportunity to take those hard-to-recycle plastics and extract the value out of the materials that would have otherwise been disposed of, and find an opportunity to have a value added product [in the production of crude oil]."

The entire process is constantly monitored with computers. Jeff Fery, a shift supervisor, often can be found keeping an

eye on the process.

"This is really amazing and it's come a really long way," he said while monitoring a batch last month.

Feucht said the company wants to be able to give waste plastic new life.

"Anyone can just throw all this stuff in an incinerator and burn it, but there's such a higher value delivered here in having a high value road fuel, or jet fuel," he said. "For plastic that has no good home, we say bring it on." ■

Contact Waste & Recycling News reporter Jeremy Carroll at jcarroll@crain.com or 313-446-6780.

PRODUCT INNOVATION

Turning waste into high-end shoes

By **Chrissy Kadleck**
WRN correspondent

Michigan entrepreneur Elizabeth Katzman has carved out a footprint that is equal parts stylish, cruelty free and low carbon.

Katzman, a lawyer turned stay-at-home blogger turned shoe designer, recently launched a vegan-friendly line of kicks to fill a gap in the marketplace she says exists for fashion-forward animal lovers and eco-conscious consumers.

"I started in June 2010. ... Something just clicked and I said 'I'm going to start a line of shoes.' I didn't know anything about anything except I knew I wanted to make them in the U.S. with eco-friendly materials," said Katzman, who authors Elizabeth's Kind Café blog which shares strategies for living a vegan lifestyle with kids.

She said she was depressed to find out that most shoes are manufactured in China, and she was distraught about how many animals are killed when there are plenty of quality synthetic materials available.

"It's shocking," she said. "I know there is a huge market of people who are concerned about these issues, and the fashion industry is so oblivious."

But finding the right materials and manufacturing site for her Earth- and animal-friendly shoes was a process that involved eight months of cross-country travel and nightly Google sessions trying to plug in the right combination of words to locate a product made from recycled plastic bottles.

Katzman said she wasn't able to unearth that particular product yet - she's determined to find it

one day - but what she did discover is an ultra-soft faux suede that is created from run-off waste recovered in the manufacture of plasma TVs.

"That was a huge find," Katzman said, adding that she lucked onto it during a trip to New York. She stopped in a café and searched the Internet and hit on Toray Industries America Inc. in New York. She said she called the company and was able to visit that day to see the material.

"The quality is amazing. There is no reason to make anything with real suede with that available," she said.

Her faux leather is an environmentally friendly synthetic that emits no volatile organic compounds and is said to be biodegradable over time. In fact, her faux leather supplier is Roos International Ltd. Inc., which sells the product as a wall covering, Katzman said.

Both of her faux leather and suede collections are handmade in a small shop in California.

Her inaugural pairs - faux suede booties and platforms and faux leather combat boots - hit virtual shelves in September.

Visitors to her blog can easily



E. Katzman

click to her online store which retails eco-friendly shoes, flip flops inspired by People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) sporting animal prints and the message "Go Veg," and a do-it-yourself cleaning line. A portion of the proceeds from every sale benefits PETA and 1% for the Planet, a global environmental initiative.

"All of my shoes have a different story," she said. But they are all cruelty-free and designed to be fashionable, functional and full of staying power. "Because they are handmade they are so comfortable. They are like wearing tennis shoes. I have two kids [Henry, 2, and Noah, 4] and I can carry them all around and chase after them no problem. A large part of this is to make shoes that I can wear. If I can't wear it, what's the point?"

Admittedly, the shoes are not cheap, Katzman said. The faux suede bootie retails for \$250 and the faux leather combat boots cost \$180. The faux suede platform heels fall in the middle at \$230.

"I quickly realized in order to grow this business I need to get into retail stores. People need to be able to try them on," she said.

Her collection is designed to be classic, staple pieces in a wardrobe that won't go out of style.

"There are a million shoes out there. And especially since everything is from China they are cheap and kind of comfortable. But when people try [my] shoes on, they can't believe it."

Katzman is looking for a new manufacturer and intends to introduce additional styles next year, including seasonal designs and a men's sandal. ■



Contact WRN correspondent Chrissy Kadleck at ckadleck@yahoo.com.

Gustavus lays plans for grant

ST. PETER — With a \$575,418 grant from The Margaret A. Cargill Foundation, Gustavus Adolphus College has announced four strategic initiatives for its environmental studies program.

The initiatives include: an endowment to establish a summer research fund for Environmental Studies students; the creation of a compost system for campus food waste; a greenhouse for the student-run organic farm; and purchase of instrumentation for Environmental Studies.

The composting system and greenhouse not only aim to increase sustainability in college operations but also

Please see GRANT, Page B3

GRANT: Composting system, greenhouse among plans

Continued from Page B1

will help forge connections with environmental studies-related curriculum.

With the greenhouse, the student farm will be able to extend its season from the summer into the regular academic year, affording opportunities to integrate classroom studies with farm operations. The composting system will complement the farm and greenhouse operation, providing a direct example of nutrient recycling and sustainable waste handling.

The grant from The Margaret A. Cargill Foundation builds upon the college's commitment to increase the sustainability of its campus and train future

environmental leaders. It comes only two months after the dedication of Beck Academic Hall, which is awaiting LEED certification, and the installation of \$1 million in solar energy projects for four campus buildings.

The Margaret A. Cargill Foundation supports a broad range of charitable purposes, including the environment; American Indian art and Native American cultures; art and teacher education; care for the elderly; disaster relief; child and adult education; and animal welfare.

Margaret A. Cargill was the granddaughter of William Cargill, co-founder of Cargill Inc., a Minnesota-based company that is one of the world's largest corporations.

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Corn Plus admits faking pollution data

* The ethanol cooperative pleaded guilty to falsifying pollution-monitoring numbers. It must pay \$760,000 in fines and penalties.

By DAVID SHAFFER dshaffer@startribune.com

Minnesota ethanol maker Corn Plus pleaded guilty Wednesday to a federal felony charge of falsifying air pollution-monitoring data and must pay \$760,000 in fines and penalties.

Corn Plus paid a \$450,000 criminal fine levied by a federal judge and has 30 days to pay a separate \$310,000 civil penalty imposed by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, whose investigation helped uncover the violations.

The farmer-owned cooperative, based in Winnebago, Minn., will remain on probation in the criminal case for three years. Two managers and a plant worker have been fired over the falsification but have not been charged.

Deliberate faking of monitoring records is extremely rare, state officials said. "I have never heard of something like that," said Jennifer Lovett, a state pollution control specialist who first spotted the discrepancies.

U.S. District Judge John Tunheim, who sentenced Corn Plus in Minneapolis, also found that its latest offense violated the terms of probation for a misdemeanor conviction two years ago for a water quality violation.

"If this happens again, there will be stiffer sanctions," the judge warned Bill Drager, president of the Corn Plus board of directors, who appeared on behalf of the cooperative.

Under a plea bargain with the U.S. attorney's office, current Corn Plus employees and board members will not face prosecution. The deal leaves open the possibility of charges against fired employees, including the former general manager and former environmental compliance manger.

Tunheim's sentence requires all current employees and directors not only to be trained annually on complying with pollution rules, but also to pass written tests.

Lovett, who works for the state Pollution Control Agency, spotted the fake monitoring data about dust-removal equipment last year while following up on an earlier inspection. For example, monitoring logs for January, April and June of 2009 had exactly the same entries for each day.

"It's impossible for them to be the same from month to month," said Lovett, whose findings were passed on to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, which joined the investigation and helped spot more false records.

"Environmental compliance in our country depends on trust," Assistant U.S. Attorney David Genrich said. "The EPA and the MPCA simply can't be in all places at all times."

As the government confronted Corn Plus about the fake data, the cooperative launched an internal investigation, found additional false records and voluntarily turned over the findings to federal officials, Genrich said.

In its plea, Corn Plus admitted that its employees filed false reports in 2009 and 2010 indicating that its control equipment, known as bag houses, was working properly. Lovett said false monitoring logs also were created for the plant's scrubbers, which remove volatile organic compounds.

Drager, the board president, said the cooperative has tried to "change the culture of the organization."

Corn Plus wasn't accused of polluting the air, and its attorney, Dustan Cross, said there is no evidence that particulate matter, mainly corn dust, was released into the environment.

He said such a release, had it occurred, would have been seen from the smokestack, which is monitored visually. However, dust emissions are not measured directly, Genrich said.

Some particles in the air can harm the lungs, and the EPA says studies have linked such pollution to asthma, chronic bronchitis and other illness. No cases of illness have surfaced in this case.

The latest fines come on top of an \$891,000 civil penalty and a \$150,000 criminal fine for a 2009 federal misdemeanor conviction over Corn Plus' failure to prevent a wastewater discharge that had a high biological oxygen demand — a measure of its nutrient richness — into a drain that emptied into Rice Lake.

Corn Plus said it has hired a new environmental, health and safety manager, as well as a consultant to assist on environmental compliance. Despite its environmental record, the cooperative has a history of supporting alternative energy, including two wind power turbines on site and technology to burn a distilling byproduct in place of fossil fuel.

As one of Minnesota's oldest ethanol plants, built in 1993, Corn Plus has struggled with aging, less-efficient technology at a time when high corn prices have reduced ethanol refining margins, according to a recent regulatory filing by the cooperative.

In September, the cooperative's new general manager, Mark Drake, wrote to its more than 700 shareholders that without \$12 million in federal tax credits this year for using an alternate-fuel boiler, the board "would have had to consider ceasing operations." Corn Plus recently said it would invest \$20 million to make the plant more efficient.

David Shaffer * 612-673-7090

More cities ban driveway sealer cited as pollutant

- Asphalt-based sealants are safer than coal-tar products, MPCA says.

By LAURIE BLAKE • lblake@startribune.com

In the 18 months since White Bear Lake became the first Minnesota city to forbid a common type of driveway sealant, about a dozen others have followed, as evidence mounts that chemicals from the sealants are creating a hazardous and expensive problem in storm-water ponds.

The bans on coal-tar sealants apply to homeowners who seal their own driveways and contractors who apply sealants commercially. Both are now expected to choose safer, asphalt-based sealers.

Although the sealant industry disputes the findings, research by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency shows a connection between coal-tar sealants put on driveways and parking lots and the PAHs (poly aromatic hydrocarbons) that are showing up in city storm-water ponds, said Don Berger, state program administrator of storm-water policy in the MPCA's municipal division. The PAHs are believed to be harmful to humans, fish and other aquatic life.

"Data we have collected over the last year indicate that there is a good percentage of these pollutants tied to coal-

Sealants continues on B5 ►

**« EVERY CITY
IS IN THE SAME
SITUATION - IT'S A
HUGE PROBLEM. »**

Mark Burch, public works director for the city of White Bear Lake

More cities outlaw coal-tar driveway sealants

◀ SEALANTS FROM B1

tar sealants," Berger said.

"The MPCA will continue to support municipalities who choose to phase out the use of coal-tar-based sealants to reduce a known source of contamination to storm-water collection systems," he said.

With an estimated 20,000 storm ponds in the metro area, cities are discovering that many ponds contain PAHes. Because the MPCA requires cities to keep storm ponds clean and in good working order, and to dispose of contaminated pond sediment in specific ways, some cities face astronomical storm-water costs.

Indeed, the cities that have outlawed the sealants have done so to become eligible for MPCA cleanup grants.

Circle Pines put a ban in place and received \$45,000 from the state to help pay \$100,000 in pond sediment disposal costs, said City Administrator Jim Keinath.

Inver Grove Heights, the latest city to forbid use of the seal-

ants, also is counting on a grant after its ban takes effect, City Engineer Tom Kaldunski told City Council members.

After testing just 12 of the city's 578 storm-water ponds, he has found three ponds with contaminated sediments — two with such high levels of PAHes that they must be disposed of in a sanitary landfill at a cost ranging from \$120,000 to \$180,000.

"Every city is in the same situation — it's a huge problem," said White Bear Lake public works director Mark Burch.

Before the end of the year, an MPCA work group is expected to release new research and recommendations to give cities further options for disposing of pond sediments.

Industry disputes MPCA claim

The MPCA is talking with the Pavement Coatings Technology Council — which represents the sealant industry — in hopes of encouraging the group to voluntarily phase out the material.

Anne LeHuray, executive

director of the group, said the council will look over the MPCA's latest research, but "it remains our view — and I think we have the science to back it up — that the original claim made by MPCA is incorrect."

Car exhaust and wood smoke are greater sources of PAHes than coal-tar sealants, LeHuray said. "The bans will not do what they think they will do."

But outlawing the sealants has worked well for White Bear Lake, Burch said. "From our perspective there wasn't a down side."

To cooperate with the ban, many large retailers have taken coal-tar sealants off their shelves and replaced them with asphalt-based sealants, he said.

Acceptable products carry a label that says "asphalt immersion," he said.

Businesses also switched to asphalt products, Burch said. "The [sealant] industry was very concerned, but I talked to private commercial guys doing applications on driveways.

They told me that they've got all types of products."

The cost of disposing of sediments starts when a city hires someone to take a sample and test it. Cleaner sediments can be scooped out of ponds and spread on the ground as fill, but costs climb if it must be taken to a landfill, Berger said.

Even if cities could afford it, there isn't room in landfills to accept all the contaminated pond sediments.

With that in mind, White Bear Lake is now testing the prospects for storing sediments in a berm close to Varney Lake, where they were removed.

"We will deposit the sediments, cover it over, seed it and put a trail on top," Burch said. If follow-up monitoring shows that the contaminants stay put and don't become a problem, will be a less-expensive option for handling the sediments, Burch said.

Laurie Blake • 952-746-3287

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Recycling goal isn't so simple

• Minneapolis considers single- or dual-sort system as Hennepin County increases pressure to boost the recycling rate to 35 percent.

By STEVE BRANDT sbrandt@startribune.com

Making household recycling simpler in Minneapolis will boost tonnage significantly, but that alone won't meet Hennepin County's 35 percent standard for cities, according to a report by a city consultant.

The city's consideration of a switch comes amid considerable pressure from Hennepin County to raise its recycling rate, currently at 17 percent. City officials argue that demographic factors, such as poverty and a large number of rental households, undercut the recycling rate. But St. Paul has achieved a 30 percent rate with a dual-sort system it adopted in 2001.

A consultant the city has hired to guide a switch from its seven-sort system said that going simpler could raise recycling tonnage for household garbage by 20 to 40 percent in Minneapolis. But that would fall short of the doubling of its current rate needed to reach the county's goal.

Moreover, even if the city decides relatively soon to switch to using one- or two-container recycling, the standard for most households elsewhere in the county, it's not likely to meet the county's deadline to do so by the end of 2012, officials said. It may need to buy and distribute new carts or bins for recycling, invest in different collection trucks and negotiate a new agreement with haulers.

Consultant J.D. Lindeberg of Michigan-based Resource Recycling Systems said that Minneapolis can expect to collect more tonnage with a simpler sorting program, but the reject rate for recyclables will also rise. The city's net income from its recycling shouldn't drop significantly, and the switch will make collecting recyclables more efficient, he said.

The city is running pilot collection programs in several neighborhoods in which residents put all recyclable materials in one or two containers. The increase in volume collected ranges from 30 percent with Seward neighborhood's two-sort pilot to Willard Hay neighborhood's 85 percent with a single cart. City Engineer Steve Kotke said he's presuming that the entire city will switch to one or two containers unless the consultant's final findings suggest otherwise.

The council's Transportation and Public Works Committee directed Kotke to come up with a recommendation for a new recycling program that balances city cost, resident convenience and amount collected. That's not expected until at least March.

One complication for Minneapolis is that city crews haul recycling in half of the city, while a consortium of private haulers serves the other half. The contract with those haulers doesn't expire until 2013. Kotke said that could mean that half of the city gets simpler recycling sooner than the rest, or that the contract is renegotiated.

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Recycling becomes a growth business

Back in the 1970s, long before recycling became mainstream, Jack Cameron had a vision: Keep old appliances out of landfills.

ON BUSINESS NEAL ST. ANTHONY

Only 35 years after starting Appliance Recycling Centers of America, CEO Edward "Jack" Cameron believes he finally may have found the company's growth trajectory.

Cameron, 70, who started ARCA with one other employee, has proven to be a tenacious entrepreneur. He has survived by adapting in a game played at the intersection of local and federal environmental policies and the whims of big manufacturers and retailers.

ARCA is a thinly traded company with a market value of only \$30 million. It isn't followed by any Wall Street analysts and doesn't forecast profits. But in an era of fast-money corporate managers, Cameron has quietly presided over one of the best-performing companies of the last two years.

Cameron has a three-pronged business that has started to hit on all cylinders, thanks to a growing movement by government, manufacturers, some major retailers and electric utilities to remove old appliances from the market and replace them with the most efficient models.

For the first nine months of 2011, profit is up 160 percent to \$4.5 million, or 77 cents per share. That beats any full-year profit in the company's history. Revenue rose 19 percent to \$98.7 million so far this year.

The outlook appears bright.

"I've been trying to get to this point for a long time," Cameron quipped the other day.

An accountant by training, Cameron quit a job peddling corporate computer systems in 1976 to start Appliance Recycling as a two-man shop that would buy old stoves and refrigerators, sell 80 percent of them for scrap and refurbish and sell the rest through the used-appliance market.

Today, Appliance Recycling employs 500 people nationally and is dedicated to working with retailers to remove used appliances from the marketplace and keep the ozone-depleting and carbon-releasing gasses from the atmosphere and out of landfills. Its largest business, 20-store ApplianceSmart, retails energy-efficient appliances at match-any-competitor prices. ApplianceSmart also became the first independent appliance retailer last year to partner with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Responsible Appliance Disposal program, which requires free pickup and proper recovery of chemicals from old air conditioners, refrigerators and freezers, and complete recycling.

Business is good. ARCA opened a new store this fall in St. Cloud for sale of new products, that included highly discounted showroom models, discontinued lines and other "out-of-box" appliances.

ARCA's recycling business for utility conservation programs around the country grew from \$17.2 million to \$26.7 million during the first nine months of 2011 over 2010. Increasingly, local governments and utilities, which get higher returns from conservation investments than building new power plants, are using incentives to get consumers to buy efficient "Energy Star"-rated refrigerators and air conditioners.

The company's smallest and newest business is a huge, fully integrated recycling center in Philadelphia. ARCA is half owner of the new \$10 million plant in an old industrial area on the Delaware River where 75 workers use next-generation equipment that can shred, drain fluids and properly recycle up to 700,000 refrigerators, stoves and other appliances in a year.

Less than 5 percent of what comes into the plant needs to be landfilled, he said.

This business has the most potential to be duplicated around the country through centers that could each generate \$10 million to \$15 million in revenue. Cameron and his backers say such plants represent the future of appliance recycling.

His partners include GE Logistics and Home Depot. General Electric is one of the world's largest manufacturers of energy-efficient appliances, and Home Depot is one of the biggest retailers. The facility makes money on the difference between what it pays for the old stuff and the price it can get for the recycled material.

Old appliances collected from a 12-state region are sent to the "ARCA Advanced Processing" regional facility.

Home Depot was the first major retailer to commit to 100 percent recycling of all the product it picks up after it sells a new refrigerator or air conditioner. Other retailers still bid out at least some of their returns to used-appliance dealers; some of the old units are sold into Third World countries.

GE Logistics, which is looking for the next site, and Home Depot guarantee Appliance Recycling a steady stream of used merchandise for proper recycling.

"It's a complete and proper management of the material," Cameron said. "Then we shred and separate the metals and get it to area steel mills and recyclers. We're looking to do 400,000 to 500,000 [appliances] in Philadelphia next year.

"This can be an industry solution. It will take more big retailers commit to complete and proper recycling. We can open different-sized recycled centers."

A huge shredder dismembers stoves and dryers. Meanwhile, a \$5.5 million, 40-foottall behemoth known as Untha Recycling Technology turns a refrigerator a minute into neat piles of plastic and metal for sale to scrap dealers, and captures 99 percent of the fluids and foam for recycling as well.

"Home Depot is the first major retailer to say, 'We don't want any of these old appliances back in the marketplace,'" said Cameron, who's working with GE Logistics to get similar commitments from others. "This is what we've wanted to do for 20 years."

At \$263,278 in total 2010 pay, Cameron was the lowest-paid CEO in the Star Tribune's most-recent ranking of the 100 highest-paid Minnesota CEOs. He has a patient, friendly board of directors and no plans to retire.

Norman Pessin, a New York investor in Appliance Recycling, likes what he's seeing.

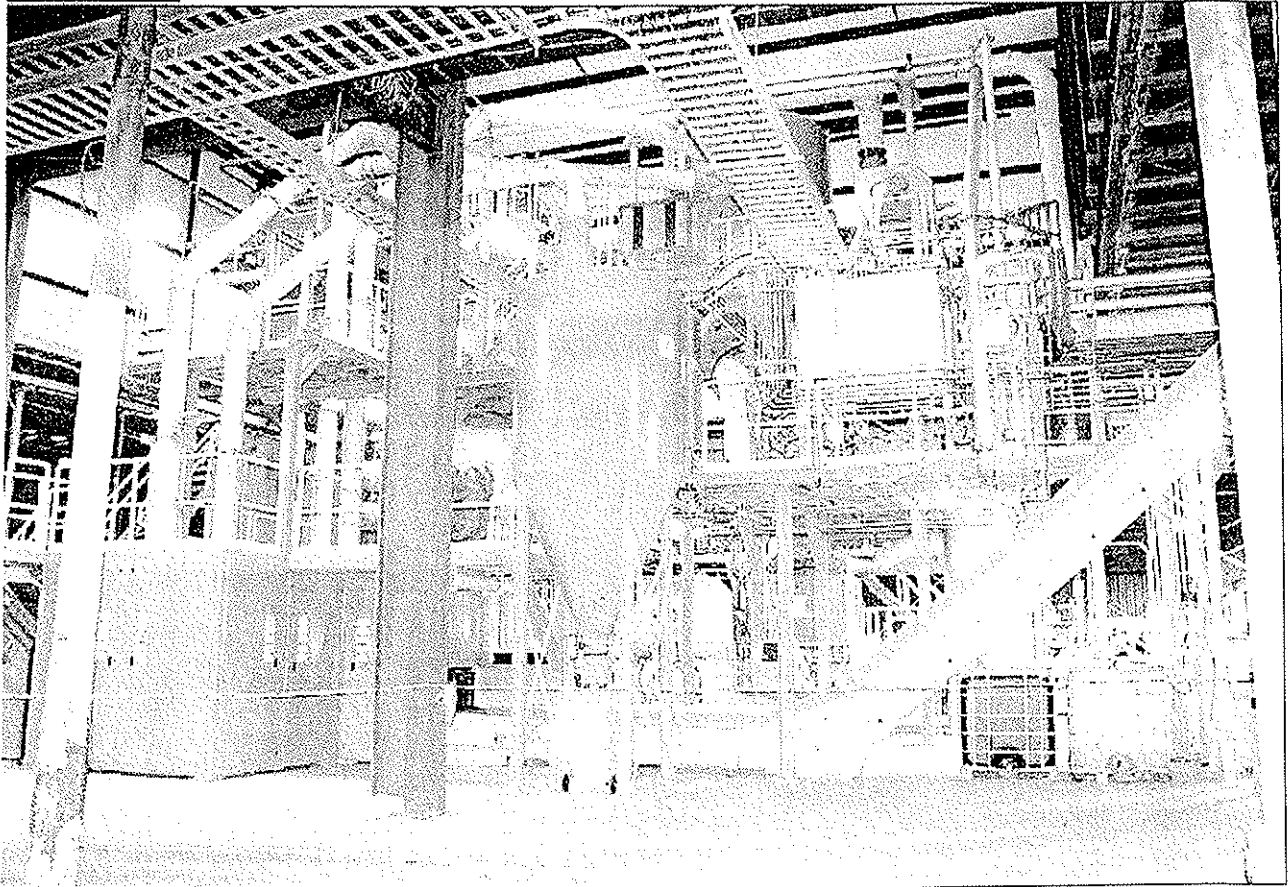
"I've never met anybody at any company who is indispensable," said Pessin in an interview. "Jack may be. Jack is a survivor of all these changes in his industry. And he knows what he's building."

Pessin, 73, bought 400,000 shares in Appliance Recycling in early 2010 for about \$2 per share, part of a secondary stock offering that netted a critical \$1.8 million that helped finance the Philadelphia facility. The shares closed at \$5.01 on Friday. nstanthony@startribune.com

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BRUCE BISPING * bbisping@startribune.com Appliance Recycling CEO Edward "Jack" Cameron is surrounded by energy-efficient washers and dryers in the St. Louis Park ApplianceSmart store.



Appliance Recycling Centers of America The Untha Recycling Technology materials recovery system for refrigerators and freezers at ARCA's 75-employee Advanced Processing facility in Philadelphia.



BRUCE BISPING * bbisping@startribune.com Richard Christensen, ARCA director of technical services, CEO Jack Cameron and Neville Perera, technical services manager, with the "Lift and Vacuum" machine Perera invented that drains fluids from old refrigerators before they are scrapped.

Green hotel plan grows next to River Hills Mall

A 93-room Courtyard by Marriott going up next to River Hills Mall will have added conference center space and will be one of the greenest hotels in the country.

"It'll be the first LEED-certified hotel in Minnesota. It may be the highest LEED certified in the country," said developer David Peters.

The hotel is not far from the outside entrance to Scheels. Construction got under way last week and the opening is set for next fall.

Peters had the plan ready a few years ago, just as the recession hit. "We put it on the back burner for a while. But we're cautiously optimistic about the economy."

The LEED environmental aspects of the hotel will include Minnesota-made solar panels, high-efficiency mechanical systems, low-chemical emitting carpets and fabrics, drought-tolerant landscaping and other green concepts.

Peters already owns the AmericInn in Mankato as well as

the University Square center next to Minnesota State University. His firm, Terratron, is based in Park City, Utah.

He said they expanded the amount of conference and meeting space at the hotel from the original plan to 6,000 square feet. That's in part because his AmericInn conference space is heavily used for weddings and meetings.

"We think this will be the destination point for weddings, for sure, and conferences. There will be seating for about 400."

There are also plans for a

future restaurant at the site.

Plenty of job seekers

In a sign of the times, a local costume rental business has been inundated with job seekers.

BuyFun.com — better known as Costume's Galore — ships Halloween costumes across the country in October. They're taking on 500 seasonal workers to help out.

"We've had over 1,000 applicants," said Elise Schwartz. "It was nowhere near that last year." Last year, in fact, the company had trouble even filling the 400

seasonal jobs.

Many of the applicants come well- if not overqualified. "We have six people working in customer service with their master's degrees," Schwartz said.

Investment property hot

If you have a few million in cash and are looking for a more stable investment in a tumultuous economy, commercial properties are hot.

In Mankato, a few well-known properties are for sale.

Please see KROHN, Page C2



TIM KROHN
Free Press

KROHN: Got millions?

Continued from Page C1

The Hilltop Hy-Vee building and property are being offered for \$9.4 million. Nearby, the Best Buy property is for sale at just over \$4 million.

Such properties, which have tenants with long-term leases, are increasingly attractive to investors who are leery of a turbulent stock market and world debt crisis.

Assuming the tenant

doesn't go out of business, the investors have a clear idea of what their return will be on the properties for the next decade or more.

U.S. commercial real estate prices have risen for several months, according to Moody's Investors Service.

Tim Krohn is a Free Press staff writer. He can be contacted at 344-6383 or tkrohn@mankatofreepress.com.

County now takes paper and plastic

By Brian Ojanpa
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MANKATO — Blue Earth County residents can now pay property taxes and virtually all other county fees electronically.

With credit card payment methods now universal in the private sector, citizens have come to expect the same convenience from the public sector, County Administrator Bob Meyer said.

The new payment mode allows people to use credit cards, debit cards and all forms of electronic or wire funds transfer. State statute allows counties to add convenience fees, which include credit card companies' transaction charges.

The scope of the electronic payment policy covers all county departments and agencies. Payments can be made face-to-face, over the phone, by mail or Internet. A third-party entity such as a bank processes credit card transactions.

The county in March began phasing in plastic acceptance in its departments. The only hard cost to the county is the card-swiping machines, estimated at between \$2,500 and \$6,000 over two years.

Meyer said benefits to the county include the increased certainty of collection, reductions in check-processing and cashing costs, improved auditing processes and greater customer convenience.

The city of Mankato has accepted credit card payments online and in person for the past few years with the city absorbing credit card fee costs of about \$3,600 per month.

BE County keeps levy flat in '12

But taxpayers to see increase after state shifts tax onto their shoulders

By Dan Linehan
dlinehan@mankatofreepress.com

MANKATO — Blue Earth County's levy will stay flat in 2012, though taxpayers will end up paying about \$1.6 million more because a credit that used to be paid by the state will shift to them.

"It doesn't net us much,"

County Board Chair Kip Bruender said Tuesday, "but it feels good."

Commissioner Vance Stuehrenberg credited staff, including County Administrator Bob Meyer, for finding a way to the 0 percent increase.

Meyer, in his first year as administrator, didn't take much of the credit for him-

self, saying he made "no significant cuts."

He said actions in previous years to reduce employee costs are paying off. This year, those unfilled positions include assistant county administrator and assistant human services director.

More savings came from a sort-of serendipitous change involving that state

credit.

In the past two years, the state would promise to pay \$1.6 million and only pay about \$1.1 million, leaving a gap of \$588,000. Now that the credit is paid for by citizens, the county can reasonably expect to collect nearly all of the \$1.6 million.

The parks budget will be balanced by delaying an overlay of the Red Jacket Trail, estimated at \$80,000.

The County Board set a preliminary 3 percent levy

in September, which was the basis for mailings sent out last month.

Meyer said "we quite frankly set it higher" than they absolutely had to.

A big reason: The state could have, but eventually did not, reduce the county's 2011 aid.

"We bought ourselves some time to make sure some of the promises made could be fulfilled," he said.

The board also approved

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LEVY: Wages rise

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cost-of-living raises for the county's non-union employees of 1 percent on Jan. 1 and another 1 percent on July 1, totaling just over 1.5 percent for the year.

The raise was the same as was given to union employees, which didn't sit well with Commissioner Drew Campbell. A former union employee, Campbell said he and his colleagues used to complain the wage increases they bargained hard for were extended to management. A 1.5 percent raise for a manager ends up being more money than the same percentage raise for an employee, he argued.

The board passed the wage increases 4-to-1.