

In the photo from left, David D. Kann Jr., Adams County Conservation District Chesapeake Bay Program Nutrient Management Specialist, John Caffrey, certified recycling professional for Wilenta Feed Inc. of Secaucus, N.J., and Ken Smith, who raises turkeys for Wampler Foods on his New Oxford area farm, look at a mechanical composter being tested on Smith's farm.

Adams County Composting Program

(Continued from Page A33)

"For our use we don't need to go that far. No composting that we ever see goes that far, but it could," Caffrey explained.

The five variables of composting are air, water, nitrogen, carbon and particle size. And, Caffrey said, "If we take our composter to a new site we have to work with it to adjust those variables until we get composting to a suitable end." Experimentation is a necessary component of the process, he said.

Ken Smith who operates a farm that produces turkeys for Wampler Foods of New Oxford tried the composter and said while he previously spread manure on his fields this process produced a much more refined product that could be sold.

Caffrey said his company is also investigating the possibility of setting up their own composting site in the area, "taking waste material in from food processors and so forth to get a custom blend . . . and sell the end product ourselves . . . this could be as early as six months from now."

The company was planning talks with the Adams County Solid Waste Authority which is investigating the development of a composting site.

Bicky Redman, Adams County's Solid Waste Coordinator, said it appears that a central municipal composting site would save the community money. It would be the first such operation in the Commonwealth. She said the county hopes to have such a site chose by the end of the year.

The digester used on the farms is a small version of what the county would need, she said. The authority would probably need two digesters that each measure 180 feet in length and are 14-feet in diameter. "We would be loading 50 to 70 tons per day," she said.

The composters would be turning 24 hours a day and each load would be digested in three days—the same as those on the farms. Cost of the project is estimated at \$14 million.

And, just as in the case of farmers, the county would look for a market to sell the end product. "We're looking at possibly golf courses or turf growing businesses," Bicky said.

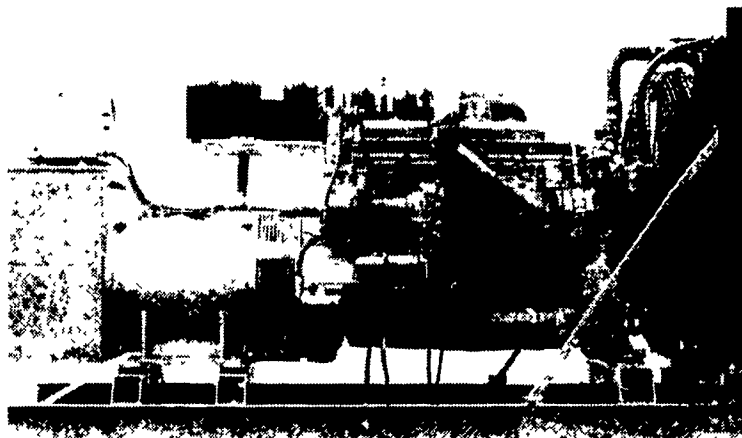
She said with the number of landfills closing, composting becomes a viable means to dispose of waste.

And, in the case of farmers it might just be an economic option to dispose of their farm waste and earn cash too.

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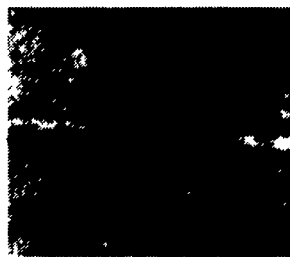
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