

# Methane-to-electricity plant draws raves

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A gas-to-energy plant at the Reichs Ford Road landfill will be a moneymaker for Frederick County, according to officials.

The Frederick County Commissioners gathered Thursday afternoon to recognize the plant, which began operating in June.

Under an agreement facilitated by the Northeast Maryland Waste Disposal Authority, the plant was built by Energenic, a private company based in Mays Landing, N.J.

Energenic spent about \$8 million to build the plant, expand the existing methane gas extraction system at the landfill and connect it to the electricity grid.

Frederick County spent about \$100,000 for project development, mostly in staff time, but under the agreement will get at least \$280,000 annually from Energenic.

The plant uses methane gas produced in the landfill to create electricity. It is estimated that it will generate electricity from about 4,000 tons of methane gas annually.

The plant is not the same as the proposed waste-to-energy trash incinerator, which has generated controversy in the community. Commissioner Kai Hagen, who has opposed that plant, said he does not oppose the landfill gas-to-energy project.

"This is one kind of waste-to-energy I can support," Hagen said at the gas-to-energy ceremony.

Officials estimate it will generate 15,000 megawatts each year -- enough to power about 11,000 houses.

County officials are expecting payments of \$280,000 from the private company operating the plant each year. The company will make money



Photo by Meg Tully

A worker displays the generator at the Reichs Ford Road landfill gas-to-energy project.

through the sale of electricity generated as well as the sale of renewable energy credits and energy reduction credits.

"There are no state or county funds invested in this project, and that's remarkable considering a total cost of \$8 million," Commissioners President Jan Gardner said.

Another major benefit of the plant, officials said, is that it will reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Methane is more potent than carbon dioxide, Gardner said. One ton of methane is equal to about 21 tons of carbon dioxide in its impact as a greenhouse gas, she said.

The recognition ceremony included a presentation by Chris Voell, a program manager in the Climate Change Division of the Environmental Protection Agency.

Voell, a Frederick County resident, said he has attended dozens of similar ceremonies across the nation.

"It's great to be able participate in one here in my hometown," he said.

Methane is a great source of renewable energy that will help reduce the country's dependence on fossil fuels, he said.

Additionally, the greenhouse gas emissions eliminated through the plant are equal to the emissions of about 16,000 passenger vehicles, he said.

There are seven other gas-to-energy plants operating in the state and about 550 across the country.