Automotive Engine Powered Generators for Landfill Gas Fueled Generation

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Stan background

- Mennonite Dairy Farm In Indiana
- Purdue University – BS Conservation of Natural Resources 1973
- 34 Years USDA
- Blue Ridge RC&D – LFG, EnergyXchange
- 10 Years Appalachian State University Energy Center
Conservation Ethic

Ivan Steury – “...the farmer learns to appreciate nature and the handiwork of God.”

Nigerian Chieftan – “I conceive that land (natural resources) belong to a vast multitude, of which many are dead, few are living, and countless numbers are yet unborn.”
Goals of Presentation

• Encourage Use Of Landfill Gas To Meet *Local* Energy Needs and to Promote Social Benefits
• Document Successful Use Of Automotive Engines For Landfill Gas Fueled Generation
• Identify Situations Where These Small Generators Work
1999-2017
6 acre landfill
40 scfm gas

EnergyXchange Renewable Energy Center
POTTERY STUDIOS

• First LFG Ceramic Kiln
• 4 resident artists
• 10 scfm – Occassional
Glass Studio

- First LFG Glass Furnaces
- 2300 F 24/365
- 15-20 scfm continuous
Glass and Ceramic Business Incubator

- Created 30 Craft Businesses
- Saved $1.5 million in fuel costs
- Huge Economic Impact – Crafts/Tourism
- Positive Impact On Greenhouse Gases
Project Branch Out

- LFG Heated Greenhouses
- Provide Seed Stock of Native Azaleas and Rhododendrons For Local Growers
- Reduce Poaching of Rare Plants
- Expand Local Horticulture/Nursery Industry with Native Shrubbery
• New Cash Crops
• Internships
• Aquaponics
• Greenhouse Floral
Other Renewable Energy
Accomplishments

- First Use of LFG for Glass Furnaces & Pottery Kilns
- Jobs At Site
- Incubated New Craft Business (30)
- 27 Expanded or New Native Plants Businesses In Nursery Industry
- Reduced Poaching and Wild Harvest of Rare Plants
- Decreased Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Use of Previously Wasted Fuel
- 15 Years of Fuel
- Pilot for other Community-based LFG Projects
Appalachian State University

- Boone, North Carolina
- 18,295 Students
- Well known for
  - Education
  - Business Administration
  - Renewable Energy
  - Sustainability
  - Economics
  - International Education
  - Geography and Planning
Appalachian State University
Energy Center (Est. 2001)

• Mission - Committed to research, development, policy analysis and demonstrations in all areas of energy, including...
  • Energy efficiency
  • Wind
  • Small hydro
  • Bio-fuels
  • Solar
  • Biogas and landfill gas
Community TIES

- Duplicate Success of EnergyXchange
- Community-based, Small to Medium Sized Landfills
- Initial Funding by Two Foundations
- 8 Targeted Counties Initially
  - Economically Challenged, Tobacco Dependent
  - Bertie, Robeson, Columbus, Scotland, Haywood, Cleveland, Rockingham, Rutherford
- 13 Counties Assisted
- 7 Counties with Operational Projects
Small to Medium Sized Landfills

- Commercial Developers Not Interested
- Still Enough Gas For A Community-based Project
- Smaller Landfills Usually Owned By Limited Resource Counties
- Projects With Social Benefits
Direct Thermal vs Generation

- Direct
  - Jobs
  - Economic Development
  - Interesting
  - Users Remote From Site

- Generation
  - Relatively Easy
  - Few Jobs
  - Mature Technology/Bigger Sites
Generators For Small Sites

- Micro-turbines
- European Biogas Engines
- High Cost
- Difficult Maintenance

Alex Hobbs – Automotive Engines
Concerns

- Durability
- Won’t start/run on Methane
- Low production
- 1st Generation – Lack of Automation
- Lack of history on biogas
- Automotive gensets usually for standby & peaking
- Throw away engines?
KSD Enterprises

- Exhausters for Coal Mines Since 1991
- Exhausters Run On Gas They Exhaust
- Highly Variable Methane – CH$_4$ as low as 10% reported, 30% verified
- Engine Repair & Overhaul
- Remote Sites
- No Electricity At Many Sites
KSD Two Gas System

- Start on Propane
- Switch to LFG After Warm-up
- Manual Gas Controls – One Propane Two LFG
- Moto-viewer Program for Gas Mixture Control
- Not automated
- Kicked Off Grid Engine Runs Too Rich, Shuts Down
Controls/Switchgear
Research & Development Plan

- Watauga County Pilot
- Fine Tune Operation
- ASU/Watauga Small Generator Testing Center
- Link Control and Switchgear Partner
- Ready for Other Applications
Stimulus Spoiled Plan

- Great Recession
- Success of Community Ties Led To 11 Shovel Ready Projects
- Good Working Relationship with NC State Energy Office Led to 6 Million In Funding
- 11 Projects Funded, 9 Projects Developed
- ALL wanted Direct Thermal Projects. Generation was Second Choice.
- 5 Counties with 7 Automotive Engines Went In At Once
Performance

- Runs on low quality gas – 40% documented, 30% likely
- Continuous duty rating About 85 kw for 8.1 L
- Actual performance on 50% CH4 LFG about 75 kw
- 34-35 scfm required at full capacity
- Oil less than 1 quart per 24 hours with quality block – compares to Jenbacher
- 12,000 -15,000 hours to overhaul with a quality block – compares to Jenbacher
- Actual Wilkes 14,272 hrs Watauga over 20,000 hrs
- Equal to 1,000,000 road miles at 70 mph, 80% throttle?
Performance Continued

- Catalytic converters plugged at 400 hrs
- Starters on 8.0L replacement regular
- Spark plugs and plug wires replaced monthly or 700 hours
- Several months 100 % uptime
- 1 million kwh Wilkes genset
- 1.5 million kwh Watauga genset
- Heat damage to ignition system biggest issue
Track Record Automotive

- 5 Counties with automotive engine generators with 7 generators
- Shaky local resources and will
- Political football
- Today 2 counties, 3 gensets
- Reason 3 counties not running today – No Passion For Project
- YOU CAN RELY ON THE TECHNOLOGY, THE PEOPLE NOT SO MUCH!!
What Did We Find

- Affordable – ¼ cost of micro-turbines, ½ cost of biogas engines
- Durability – Quality block very durable
- Can meet air quality standards w/o catalyst
- Maintenance and repair of engine easy
- Local mechanics, parts at local NAPA, Advance Auto, etc
- Most technical problems where systems merge
- Failures due to people problems
- Not enough $ to attract commercial developers
• We made our biggest mistake picking engine on basis of capacity rather than past performance
• Picked unproven 8.1/8.0L Rather than Well Proven 4.3L or 5.7L
• Runs on low quality gas – 40% document, maybe 30%
• Technicians not readily available
• Not enough profit to justify commercial
• Need packager – Engine, generator, controls/switchgear
Where Will They Work

- LFG/Biogas
- Low CH₄
- Use own electricity, micro-grid
- Passionate/competent local operator
- Small closed landfill or new small growing landfill
- Add-on to commercial project
What Would We Do Differently

- Use most proven block OR one operators familiar with
- One county at a time
- Find a company willing to package
- Make sure blocks are well sourced and proven
Carbon Offsets Wilkes/ASU

- REI
- Carbon Neutral Commuter
  Sterling Planet – Offsets somewhere else
- Carbon Offsets For Travel
- Locally Sourced And Verified Carbon Credits
- Wilkes Break Even to Plus
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