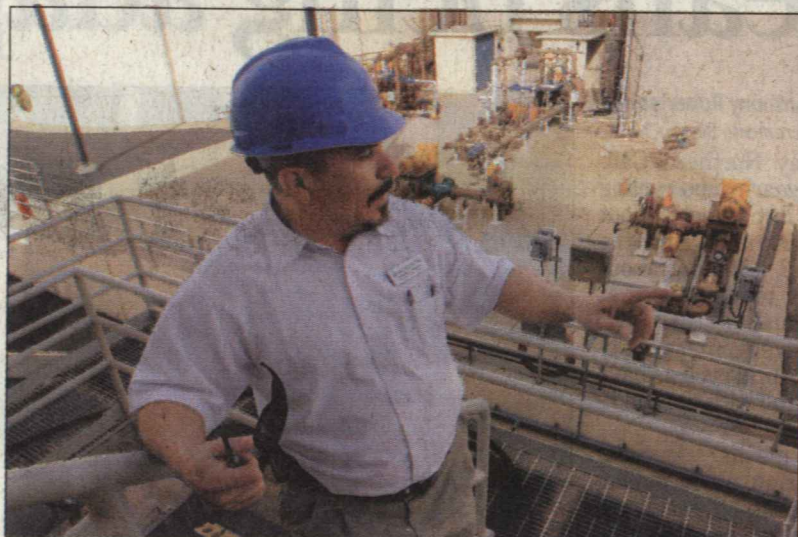


# EAST BAY & BAY AREA

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## Coalition flush with energy ideas



DAN ROSENSTRAUCH/STAFF

Dennis Laniohan, operational service director at the Delta Diablo Sanitation District in Antioch, discusses the facility's "digester" operation. The district looks to minimize environmental impacts.

■ Regional group hoping to hire firm that can convert biosolids into renewable fuels

By Robert Jordan

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ANTIOCH — Many Bay Area agencies are banking on a future in which a flush of the toilet could help create an endless supply of green renewable energy.

Each year in the Bay Area, enough waste is flushed down the toilet, or rinsed down sinks and showers to fill AT&T Park to a depth of 51 feet.

Wastewater districts and cities from San Francisco to Fairfield signed an agreement in May to form the Bay Area Biosolids to Energy Coalition — to develop better

### GREEN THINKING

The 16-member Bay Area Biosolids to Energy Coalition hopes to find ways to convert 158,000 dry metric tons of biosolids produced each year in the Bay Area into renewable energy. To learn more about the coalition, visit [www.bayareabiosolids.com](http://www.bayareabiosolids.com).

ways to dispose of the waste. Biosolids are the dried sludge left after wastewater is treated through a multistep process — 158,000 dry metric tons of biosolids are produced in the Bay Area each year.

The 16-member coalition began seeking proposals for converting biosolids into a renewable green source of energy.

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# Energy

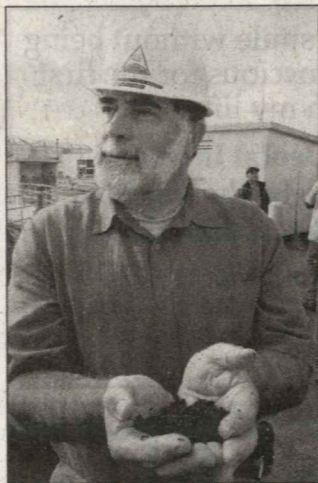
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"Our goal is to maximize the energy potential for biosolids while minimizing the environmental impact," said Gary Darling, general manager of Delta Diablo Sanitation District in Antioch.

The coalition is in its infancy and years away from building a facilities capable of turning biosolids into energy, said Caroline Quinn, coalition project manager and engineering services director for Delta Diablo.

The coalition's deadline for proposals from outside companies is Friday. The coalition has several steps to go through before it will or is able to complete the project, including an extensive public outreach campaign and environmental impact report.

Delta Diablo is the lead agency and currently harnesses some of its own biosolids energy to create about 40 percent of the power it needs to operate its wastewater facility. The energy generated is enough to power roughly



DAN ROSENSTRAUCH/STAFF

Dave Requa, of the Dublin San Ramon Services District, holds a handful of biosolids, which will be converted to energy.

315 homes.

However, the district can harness only about 50 percent of the potential energy from heating the biosolids and extracting methane gas.

Delta Diablo, like the other coalition members, is left to truck its biosolids to other counties for agricultural use or to landfills. Farmers use

the biosolids as a low-grade fertilizer.

Tighter regulations on what can go into landfills and Assembly Bill 32, aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 25 percent by 2020, are two key reasons the coalition is hoping to find ways to convert biosolids to energy.

Coalition members currently transport the 158,000 tons of dry waste a combined 800,000 miles annually.

Biosolids are difficult to apply to agricultural land during the rainy season because of muddy conditions for the trucks and farming equipment used to spread the material.

Dublin San Ramon Services District, a coalition member, is in a similar bind when it comes to disposal. The district supplies wastewater services to Dublin, Pleasanton and San Ramon and disposes of biosolids by burying it on land near its wastewater treatment facility east of Interstate 680 and north of Stoneridge Drive.

The district expects that land to reach capacity in 30

to 40 years, said Dave Requa, assistant general manager of the district.

"For us, finding an alternate way to dispose of it is going to be a necessity," he said.

Coalition members and the cities served have sent letters to federal officials, including California Sens. Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer to secure \$2 million in federal funding to help in planning the project.

The members are: the Delta Diablo Sanitation, Dublin San Ramon Services, Union Sanitary, West County Wastewater, Ironhouse Sanitary, Vallejo Sanitation and Flood Control, Fairfield-Suisun Sewer, North San Mateo County Sanitation and Sausalito Marin City Sanitary districts; the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission, the cities of Livermore, Richmond, Burlingame and Millbrae; and the Central Marin Sanitation Agency and South Bayside System Authority.

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\*\*This media coverage also ran in the following newspapers around the SF Bay Area:

- Oakland Tribune
- San Jose Mercury News
- Times-Herald (Solano and Napa Counties)
- The Reporter (Vacaville)