

LIFT Scholarship Exchange Experience for Innovation & Technology (SEE IT)
Sponsored by: WE&RF, WEF and NACWA

TRIP REPORT

SCHOLARSHIP UTILITY: *San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC), San Francisco, California*

SCHOLARSHIP UTILITY CONTACT: *Manon Fisher, Resource Recovery Analyst, mfisher@sfwater.org*

ATTENDEES:

Karri Ving – Resource Recovery and Pollution Prevention Manager
Ravi Krishnaiah – Biosolids Manager
Paula Kehoe – Water Resources Manager
Manon Fisher – Resource Recovery Analyst

TRIP DATES: August 29, 2017 – September 1, 2017

UTILITIES/SITES VISITED: DC Water, Washington DC

TECHNOLOGIES/INNOVATIONS SEEN:

- Class A biosolids program (Bloom) and curing/blending processes
- Blue Drop team
- Business practice of using capability maturity models to improve the ability to manage risk and improve utility services

TRIP BACKGROUND and RATIONALE:

The SFPUC chose to visit DC Water because of their innovation in two fields of interest: biosolids recycling and business process innovation.

The SFPUC is transitioning to Class A biosolids production at the Oceanside Treatment Plant. Currently half of SFPUC biosolids are sent to landfill to be used as alternative daily cover (ADC). The other half are land applied to farms during the months of April to October when local ordinances permit the practice. More recently, however, the passage of several assembly bills has furthered goals towards organics diversion from landfills and will change the regulatory landscape around ADC.

Regulatory hurdles, paired with capital upgrades to Class A, represent an opportunity to pursue new reuse options for this material. Looking to DC Water, the SFPUC was interested in better understanding what further processing might be necessary to bring Class A cake to market. The curing process that DC Water has implemented for their CAMBI cake has shown tremendous results and made it so that product can be sold as a valuable commodity.

The SFPUC was also interested DC Water because of the innovative work being done on business risk management. In particular, the SFPUC was interested in better understanding DC Water's focus on using capability maturity models to baseline current practices and continuously improve functional programs.

TRIP SUMMARY:

Why did you select the specific utility and technology for the visit?

As previously stated, DC Water is leading the way in two major areas of interest to the SFPUC, the first being business process innovation and organizational change management, and the second being biosolids recycling and product development (Bloom).

Based on your visit, do you think this technology/approach works for your utility?

Meeting with the Blue Drop team to discuss strategic planning and change management at DC Water was extremely informative. DC Water has developed a structured continuous improvement tool with which they assess the current state, identify gaps and develop plans to achieve world-class performance at the business unit level. This defined process is a strategic way to promote successful results by improving the performance and capabilities of different functional roles within organizations. The visit with the Blue Drop team helped the SFPUC understand DC Water's capability in risk management and staff will use lessons learned from this trip to drive internal continuous improvement and strategic planning efforts.

Similarly, visiting the Bloom operation at DC Water's Blue Plains treatment plant was informative and inspiring. Touring the facility allowed SFPUC staff to understand the logistical, operational and resource requirements associated with the program. In addition, it provided SFPUC staff with the information necessary to begin articulating the feasibility of curing and blending on-site at our Oceanside Treatment Plant versus hauling biosolids to be blended by third parties.

The information shared by the Bloom team on their robust public outreach and engagement program was also eye-opening. From proactive meetings with community gardens and environmental groups, to engaging the press and "inoculating" them with biosolids facts, the SFPUC team learned an incredible amount on how to effectively build a product brand and a robust biosolids program.

How useful was the trip in your decision making process?

This trip was critical in informing the SFPUC's approach to developing a robust Class A biosolids program. In addition, the lessons learned from the Blue Drop team will impact how decisions and process improvements are made across the agency –as the "Advancing blue" framework is easily transferrable to SFPUC practices.

What were some of the trip highlights and takeaways?

- Meeting with Blue Drop to better understand how the SFPUC can partner with Blue Drop to provide services to other municipalities while recovering costs and expanding revenue sources
- Understanding the 'Advancing Blue' initiative and how we might be able to apply it to change management and continuous improvement at the SFPUC
- Seeing how great an impact a team of two can have on the entire biosolids industry
- Meeting the bees on the roof at Blue Plains

For more highlights, watch our video!