

Testimony by Frazier Blaylock
Covanta Energy Corporation
To the Subcommittee on Insular Affairs
and Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources
April 12, 2008

Good morning Chairman Christensen, Chairman Costa and members of the committee. My name is Frazier Blaylock and I am the Director of Federal Government Affairs for Covanta Energy Corporation. Thank you for the opportunity to come speak to you today about the benefits of Energy-from-Waste (EfW) in pursuing a clean energy future for the insular areas.

Covanta Energy operates 34 Energy-from-Waste facilities in the United States, including one in Honolulu, 4 in Florida and 3 on Long Island in New York. I highlight these seven locations because of the geographic similarities they share with the insular areas we are discussing today. We also have a worldwide presence, with facilities in Europe and China.

Energy-from-Waste is a specially designed energy generation process that uses household waste as fuel and helps solve some of society's biggest challenges including dependence on fossil fuels, solid waste management, climate change, and land use. Covanta serves the disposal needs of approximately 12 million people in communities across the United States and reduces the need for fossil fuels by generating 1,265 megawatts of renewable energy, and saving the equivalent of 15 million barrels of oil each year. Every ton of trash processed at an EfW facility generates a significant 500-700 Kwh of renewable electricity on a 24/7, base-load basis. And, our operations recycle over 350 million tons of recovered metals each year.

A key benefit of the EfW process is the use of an indigenous, sustainable fuel which in and of itself creates management challenges for insular communities. Unlike fossil fuels, garbage is readily available and within short transportation distances from these energy generating facilities and the energy consumers. For each ton of trash processed at an EfW facility, enough electricity is generated to offset one barrel of oil.

It is particularly relevant for Covanta to be addressing the energy future of the insular areas because of the unique environmental benefits that we offer. EfW is a safe, reliable waste disposal method that generates renewable energy, reduces greenhouse gas emissions, recovers metals for recycling, and reduces reliance on landfills. The EfW process reduces the volume of solid waste received at a facility by 90% and displaces one ton of greenhouse gas emissions for every ton of trash we process. According to the U.S. Department of Energy, EfW makes “important contributions to the overall effort to achieve increased renewable energy use and the many associated positive environmental benefits.” In 2003, the EPA stated that EfW produces electricity “with less environmental impact than almost any other source of electricity.”

I mentioned Hawaii, New York and Florida earlier, and that is because Island and peninsula communities share some similar characteristics that can present infrastructure challenges to government. Limited drinking water supplies, a limited ability to import power and export waste, and finite land space are among those challenges. EfW, in addition to having the potential to contribute significantly to energy independence and renewable energy, has the benefit of positively impacting those challenges.

Insular and peninsula areas today are depending upon EfW as part of their growing energy and environmental infrastructure. Hillsborough and Lee Counties in Florida have expanded their existing EfW facilities because of population growth and limited landfill space. The City of Honolulu is also planning a 900 ton per day expansion of their existing EfW facility. That expansion will increase the contribution of energy generated by that renewable facility to approximately 8% the amount of all the power generated on the Island of Oahu. In addition, Florida and Long Island communities also look to EfW because it avoids threats to drinking water supplies that landfilling presents. More locally, Puerto Rico’s solid waste management plan calls for the construction of two EfW plants with a combined capacity of 2,910 tons per day.

Another critical benefit that these communities will realize by generating renewable energy at EfW plants is a net reduction in their greenhouse gas production. The avoidance of methane gas generation from landfills, avoidance of fossil fuel production, and metals recycling all contribute to EfW’s greenhouse gas avoidance.

Energy from Waste is an excellent choice for renewable power for insular communities because it can not only provide clean, reliable, base load renewable power, but it does so by solving a second insular infrastructure challenge which is uniquely met by EfW.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. I am more than happy to answer any questions the Members may have.