

CONSERVATION CORNER:

A NEW, RESPONSIBLE WAY TO PROCESS FOOD WASTE AT CAPITAL HEALTH

With each passing day the very existence of our landfills hangs in the balance. More than 40% of all food produced in America is not eaten, that amounts to 29 million tons of food waste each year. Food scraps alone make up 17 percent of what we send to landfills.

Until recently, the options for food waste disposal were not only few in number but typically very inefficient and burdening on our ecosystem. Recently, Capital Health became one of the latest Institutions to join the cause in preserving and prolonging the life span of our landfills by installing a machine called the GohBio 1001 Organic Food Waste Decomposition System at Capital Health Regional Medical Center.

In simple terms it's a "mechanical stomach", one that can digest upwards of 1,200 pounds of food waste per day. The all stainless steel cabinetry houses food digesting micro-organisms that, combined with heat and moisture in an oxygen rich environment, enables the digestion and processing of a wide spectrum of food items in a very short period of time.

"The most incredible part of this machine is that each and every pound of food waste that is digested is returned back to our ecosystem as nutrient-rich water, one of our most precious resources," said Michael Henderson, director of Food & Nutrition Services at Capital Health. "Virtually all solids are eliminated during the process and the water is simply sent down the drain. There is no end byproduct to handle, which means less trash to haul, less trash bags to use, and less maintenance for our compactors."

The environmental benefits mount up just as quickly. According to BioHitech (the manufacturer), operating the system at full capacity for one year will reduce emissions of 443,000 pounds of CO₂ and 55 MTCE of greenhouse gases. That is equivalent to taking 40 cars off the road, saving 1,200 gallons of diesel fuel, and planting almost 100 trees.

Currently, Capital Health only has the system at its Regional Medical Center cafeteria, although based on its results, another system may be included at the new cafeteria at Capital Health Medical Center – Hopewell.



Darrell Woods, dietary aide from Food & Nutrition Services (RMC) demonstrates how the GohBio 1001 Organic Food Waste Decomposition System works. Inside the stainless steel cabinetry is wood chips that mix with the food waste to speed up the decomposition process.