

Lakeside pleased with absence of pond odor

Written by CAROL POMEDAY
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Even company officials surprised by how well new aeration system is working

The big news is that nothing — no horrible odors, not even faint whiffs — has come from the vegetable wastewater lagoon at Lakeside Foods in Belgium this year.

The cold, wet spring may have stopped some people from noticing that the air smelled fresh. In the past, residents complained of foul odors when the company started its aerated lagoon in the spring, working up potato waste that had fermented on the bottom all winter.

But a few people who did notice called or wrote the company to thank them.

A letter signed by all Village Board members was sent to plant manager Jeromy Nickelsen expressing appreciation for the work the company did to solve the odor problem.

“We were even surprised,” Nickelsen said. “We were confident in the system, but we didn’t think the spring thaw would be that smooth. Whether it was just the right spring or the system itself, we don’t know.

“We’ll know next year if we do it two years in a row. Now the lagoon is at the level it should be for processing.”

Over the years, the company tried various ways to eliminate odors without much success.

Last year, the company spent close to \$500,000 to install a new aeration system and a 500,000-gallon storage tank, where all wastewater goes before entering the lagoon. Lakeside also moved its dissolved air flotation (DAF) system, which removes suspended solids from the vegetable water before it goes into the wastewater system, from its plant on Main Street to the pump building at the lagoon.

After the wastewater has gone through the DAF system, it is pumped to the storage tank, where the solids sink to the bottom. The water then goes into the lagoon has much less solids than previously, Nickelsen said.

Bottom aerators and the heated DAF system operated all winter, preventing vegetable waste from settling on the bottom as in the past, Nickelsen said.

Surface aerators, which used to spray water into the air, are now aimed downward.

The lagoon has five times more aeration than previously, Nickelsen said.

The company also built a large containment berm around the storage tank to hold the water if the tank should fail.

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The plant's old 40-acre lagoon was reduced to six acres and will be used only as a back up. The remaining 36 acres were turned into a wildlife refuge.