

NASA Facts

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Remarks by the Honorable Sean O’Keefe
NASA Administrator
Landfill Gas Project Ribbon Cutting
NASA Goddard Space Flight Center
Greenbelt, Maryland

Thank you Al (Al Diaz, Director NASA Goddard Space Flight Center) and good afternoon.

I am delighted to participate in this ceremony marking a new chapter in NASA's storied history, the dedication of our first facility-wide clean energy project.

Of course, when the public thinks about what NASA typically does, our pioneering work on aeronautics and space research and exploration comes immediately to mind.

Today, we join the ranks of those pioneering the renewable energy frontier.

And we are delighted to be partnering with the Environmental Protection Agency, Prince George’s County, Waste Management and the Toro Energy Company on this groundbreaking project.

Yes, NASA likes to conduct our work in the realm of the sky and the heavens. But it takes space on Earth to perform these feats—thousands of acres for our launch facilities, both at the Kennedy Space Center in Florida and Wallops Island, Virginia, and additional space for our scientists and engineers to work at places such as the nearly 1300 acre wide Goddard Space Flight Center.

While NASA is not the largest landholder in the federal family, we take seriously our responsibility to be a good steward of the environment.

Right here, the presence of natural splendor nearby the Goddard Spaceflight Center, including that found within the Patuxant River Wildlife Refuge and the Beltsville Agriculture Research Center—which our pipeline journeys through—underscores the importance of this storied agency’s first mission goal of ‘understanding and protecting the home planet.’

To advance this vital goal, earlier this year the Goddard Space Flight Center became the first Federal facility to heat its buildings by burning landfill gas on-site, using renewable energy from Prince George’s County’s Sandy Hill Landfill in Bowie to fire boilers that produce steam for the Center.

This project will save NASA Goddard more than \$350,000 annually in energy costs and benefit the environment by eliminating—also on a yearly basis—the equivalent of the emissions spewed by 100,000 cars. And by doing so, we are helping to fulfill President Bush's two-year old directive to the heads of Executive Departments and Agencies that the Federal Government should set a good example of conservation by reducing its own energy use in order to "save public money, protect the environment, and help to minimize shortages."

I salute everybody who put in the hard work to make this tremendous project a reality including Goddard’s Barry Green and Mary Daly, Paul Kaden from Toro Energy, Barry Caldwell from Waste Management and Jack Johnson, the Prince George's County Executive.

I’d also like to salute Al Diaz and his team at Goddard for taking a leadership role on other important environmental stewardship activities.

For example, Goddard is using on-site well water for the steam systems use in the Center’s power plant, thus saving precious purified water for the use of local communities. Goddard is also replacing all its light bulbs with energy efficient lighting fixtures.

It should come as no surprise to those of you who know about Goddard’s mission-driven Earth Science research work, how dedicated these people are to protecting the natural world.

Indeed, we are extremely proud of their efforts to help NASA and partner agencies such as the EPA significantly advance global climate change research.

Because the vantage point of space is essential to this research, the Goddard Space Flight Center, through our Earth Science enterprise, is helping to put in place a flotilla of 26 Earth observing satellites and developing other technologies that will help provide scientists a solid foundation for understanding the complex Earth climate system.

By applying our scientific, technological and system engineering expertise to this task, we are helping deliver to decision makers and the general public a global view from space that is essential to understanding global-scale changes in our planet's climate.

Now our great partner on this landfill gas project on and in the U.S. government's climate change research effort is the Environmental Protection Agency. And it gives me great pleasure to introduce the Administrator of EPA, Governor Christine Todd Whitman.

Governor Whitman, as many of you know, has been responsible for encouraging a number of private-public partnerships such as EPA's Landfill Methane Outreach Program that use market-based techniques to deliver significant environmental benefits.

She also has taken a leadership role in developing President Bush's Clear Skies Initiative, which is aimed at ensuring clean air for all Americans to breathe; the establishment of a watershed based approach to protecting our Nation's lakes, streams and rivers; and the passage of landmark brownfields legislation that is already bringing economic and environmental vitality back to neighborhoods marred by abandoned industrial sites.

Governor Whitman, before you come up, I would like to express our sincere appreciation for one other activity that EPA undertook under your leadership. During the very difficult days following the loss of Columbia and its heroic crew, EPA experts were immediately on site in eastern Texas, helping NASA officials and other responders address the immediate needs of the Columbia recovery effort, including the need to protect the public from any volatile materials from the Shuttle orbiter. The EPA team members performed this job extremely well, and during this period, Governor Whitman was tremendously supportive of our recovery efforts. So thank you again for all your help, and with that, it is my honor to invite Governor Whitman forward to present a few remarks.