
Fessenden Farm Field Trip
Tim Fessenden met the group at the King Ferry Hotel for lunch and gave us some background on the farm and the new manure handling, composting and vermiculture system. Then we proceeded to tour the composting facility. About ½ of the total manure from the dairy barn is sent to the composting facility. It is pumped into 3 holding tanks where the manure is aerated to promote aerobic N digestion. The solids are separated from the liquids. The solids are composted in wind-row piles which have forced air through the floor to aerate the pile. The compost heats to 130-150 degrees F. A portion of the compost is fed to worm beds. The worms are then separated from the vermicompost by a screen. The vermicompost is marketed as a high end soil supplement.

The separated liquid is sprayed onto grass filter growing in two greenhouses. The grass is cut every few days and put in the nearby fields to compost. The bed of one greenhouse is fly ash and compost and the bed of the other is all compost. The water filtering through the grass and soil is collected and tested. The water has tested class B – good for recreation use.

Tim said that the only thing holding him back from expanding the nutrient recovery/compost production is cash-flow. The opportunity and the technology is there to expand the vermiculture and grass filtering of waste water. For example the manure could be used to produce methane and heat the separation / vermiculture facility which would increase the production rate and quantity.

Future Meetings:

April 4th – 12:00 - Fessenden Farm Tour
April 10th – 12:00 Bill Cox (Crops and Soils)
April 24th – 12:00 Ellen Harrison & Jean Bonhotal (CfE)