

A GOLD MINE IN A WATER TREATMENT PLANT

1 Read A gold mine in a water treatment plant and decide which of the expressions below mean the same as those underlined in the passage.

- a. "Why didn't we think of this?" • b. clever administration • c. expensive load • d. leading position of great advancement • e. source of wealth • f. trigger an improvement

San Antonio's wastewater treatment plant is cutting edge. □ It doesn't look any different from most other plants but what has changed in San Antonio is in the way people think about water there. They don't, for instance, think of their Dos Rios wastewater treatment plant as a costly burden □. The San Antonio Water System (SAWS) sees Dos Rios as a resource mine □ and recycles everything the city's residents pipe in. And it makes money doing it.

The Dos Rios plant cleans the dirty water and sends it back into a water distribution system to customers. Not only does Dos Rios charge for the water, it sells every gallon of water it can recycle! The muddy-coloured sediment that remains is called sludge, and most cities separate it from their water stream, dry it, and send it to landfills. This is the "waste" in wastewater.

The folks at Dos Rios wring as much water as possible out of the sludge. Then they spread it out on the Texas turf and let it dry under the Texas sun. The sludge – what remains after bacteria eat everything harmful in the water – is rich organic material. It's trucked to a commercial compost supplier, where it's processed, bagged, and sold. By recycling the sludge – Dos Rios recycles as much as 98 % of it – SAWS cut the cost of disposal by more than half.

Smart water management □ has a kind of spiralling quality □: once you're turning the sludge into a commercial product and selling the clean water, you start thinking, What else could we be selling? Dos Rios has five enormous gas burners – the same kind you see flaring off the natural gas on oil fields. At wastewater plants, the bio-solids digesters that process and stabilize the sludge produce natural gas as a by-product. Until September 2010, the five gas flares at Dos Rios sent enormous flames into the sky 24 hours a day, disposing of that bio-gas by burning it. Then it occurred to the people at SAWS how silly it was to waste the natural gas. The Dos Rios plant now markets the gas it generates.

SAWS gets about \$20,000 a month for the natural gas it used to burn. That might seem forehead-slappingly obvious □, but San Antonio is the first – and, as far as the folks there know, the only – municipal wastewater plant in the United States to sell its bio-gas commercially.

In San Antonio, they don't call Dos Rios a wastewater treatment facility – they call it a recycling plant.

(from Charles Fishman - *The Rotarian*)

2 Which of these verbs can be used instead of those below from A gold mine in a water treatment plant: appear dissimilar, come to mind, consider, debit, discharge, distribute over, eliminate, move to, reduce by more than 50%, squeeze from, transform into.

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|-------------------------|--------------------------------|
| a. look different | g. truck to |
| b. think about | h. cut by more than half |
| c. pipe in | i. turn into |
| d. charge for | j. dispose of |
| e. wring out of | k. occur to |
| f. spread out | |