

WORLD WATER HUB SUCCESS STORY

BIOGILL & PAUL HATTEN



HARNESSING THE POWER OF NATURE

Wastewater can be a costly challenge to manage. And for many food and beverage producers and processing facilities, wastewater is not a part of their in-house expertise. When onsite treatment is required, technologies that are highly effective, robust, reliable and simple to operate and maintain are highly sought after. Enter BioGill.

“One of my beliefs in business is that one plus one should equal three. To successfully scale up in business, you need to look for ways to value add, leverage and network. And that’s what the water hub in Milwaukee has delivered to us. We’re plugging into an influential and well-established industry network, helping us to make better informed decisions as we grow our client base in the U.S.”

– Paul Hatten

BioGill is a clean-tech company manufacturing biological, above ground, attached growth bioreactors for secondary wastewater treatment. This innovative technology harnesses the power of nature with its patented nano ceramic media called “gills” that supply a multitude of attachment sites, creating the perfect air/liquid habitat for nature’s best recyclers and decomposers—microorganisms. Ultimately, the technology gives microbes an ideal environment to grow and colonize into a healthy treating biomass that consumes pollutants in the waste stream.

Developed in research laboratories of the Australian Government, BioGill has been operating since 2012 and today has units operating in more than 25 countries. The company is already helping breweries, wineries, meat processors and other industrial facilities in meeting increasingly strict compliance standards and to achieve significant savings in discharge fees. For aging and under-performing sewage treatment plants, the technology also offers an easy retrofit to add capacity and boost existing plant performance.

With its head office located in Sydney, Australia, a sales and operations office based in Singapore and a contract assembly hub in Shanghai, China, the BioGill team knew it was time for a U.S. office to be established.

“We looked at many locations and states for our U.S. operation, but Milwaukee and Wisconsin best suited our needs,” said Paul Hatten, CEO of BioGill. “While we have many sites and proven projects around the world, the U.S. is a relatively new market for us. The Water Council has proven to be a powerhouse of knowledge, contacts and advice. In the end, it was an easy decision and made perfect business sense to locate in Milwaukee.”

In January of 2017 the company established BioGill North America Inc., and in July opened its Milwaukee office within the Global Water Center, employing Annie Weidert as Regional Manager for the Americas. In October BioGill exhibited at WEFTEC, along with The Water Council, in Chicago. After the company delivered a technical paper at the event there was a tsunami of interest in the technology, which has led to the expansion of its U.S. team by adding a second full-time employee in January 2018.

CONNECTION AND COLLABORATION

Hatten believes the collaboration with Milwaukee's water technology district has already benefitted the BioGill team in many ways. In fact, The Water Council has connected them with multiple resources, including industry and academic networks as well as market research and logistics support.

"We're not reinventing the wheel, we're learning from others and we have access to many resources. Business connections have already been made with fellow Water Council members and Global Water Center tenant companies. When recruiting, we receive many applicants from Milwaukee, in comparison to other cities, due to the sheer magnitude of skilled talent in the water industry right here in the city."



Left to Right: John West, Executive Chairman, Annie Weidert, Regional Manager – Americas, Paul Hatten, CEO

Accessing the state's highly-skilled and trained talent is a critical part of the equation, but having a BioGill office located in Milwaukee also offers the company numerous opportunities to pursue research partnerships and internships with local universities. In addition to having water-focused research labs located right upstairs in the Global Water Center, there also are three engineering schools, including UW-Milwaukee, Marquette University and the Milwaukee School of Engineering located within blocks of the BioGill office.

Hatten also appreciates the convenient, central location of Milwaukee within the U.S., and how easily accessible it is to get to, from and around. As the need

for wastewater solutions continues to grow, the company knew a central location in the U.S. would be key to servicing customers throughout the nation. And, a location so nearby many of its customers was also important to its growth within key markets.

"It is fitting for BioGill to be in 'Brew City' because craft breweries are a key market focus for us," added Hatten. "Our technology is highly successful in reducing nutrient loads in brewery wastewater and offers an affordable, scalable and easy solution for brewers. Wisconsin and neighboring states such as Michigan, Illinois and Minnesota all have a high number of craft breweries—making Wisconsin an ideal location for us."

The technology also has applications in sewage treatment. About 2.4 billion people, roughly one-third of the world's population, still don't have access to proper toilets. To help fill this void, BioGill is partnering with an award-winning Chinese portable toilet manufacturer, Eco-San, to develop simple, low-energy closed-loop sanitation systems for developing countries. Eco-San is a winner of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation Toilet Challenge, which aims to improve the health and lives of people by delivering safe and sustainable access to sanitation. Eco-San already exports products to South Africa and many South East Asian countries.

Hatten believes that the company's biological treatment technology offers an affordable, effective alternative at a time when it's more critical than ever. "Globally, 80 percent of wastewater flows back into the ecosystem without being treated or reused—that's a staggering figure," said Hatten. "Being part of The Water Council means that collectively we can create a larger voice in raising awareness, sharing resources and promoting proven solutions."