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8 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
9 FOR THE CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

10 EMERGING ACQUISITIONS, LLC
11 (d/b/a Bulk Handling Systems),
12 Plaintiff,

Case No.

COMPLAINT

Demand for Jury Trial

13 v.

14 LESLIE WELLS in her official capacity as
15 the Deputy Director of the Santa Barbara
16 County Resource Recovery and Waste
17 Management Division; MUSTANG
18 RENEWABLE POWER VENTURES,
19 LLC; and VAN DYK BALER CORP.
(d/b/a Van Dyk Recycling Solutions),
20 Defendants.

21 1. Plaintiff Emerging Acquisitions, LLC d/b/a Bulk Handling Systems
22 (“Plaintiff” or “BHS”) files this Complaint for patent infringement against Defendants
23 and alleges as follows:

24 2. This is an action for patent infringement based on the Patent Laws of the
25 United States, 35 U.S.C. § 1, *et seq.*

26 3. This action arises out of Defendants making, using, selling, and offering to
27 sell separation systems and methods for sorting municipal solid waste (“MSW”),
28 including the *MSW Recycling and Waste Management Facility* in Santa Barbara County,

1 California (the “Infringing Product”) that infringe BHS’s rights in United States Patent
2 No. 7,584,856.

3 **THE PARTIES**

4 4. Plaintiff is an Oregon limited liability company with a principal place of
5 business at 3592 West Fifth Avenue, Eugene, Oregon 97402.

6 5. Defendant Leslie Wells (“Wells”) is sued in her official capacity as the
7 Deputy Director of the Santa Barbara County Resource Recovery and Waste
8 Management Division (“RR&WMD”) in California. Wells heads RR&WMD and
9 directs the employees responsible for providing Santa Barbara County residents and
10 businesses with cost-effective and environmentally sound solutions, including the
11 Infringing Product, to manage the community’s waste in ongoing violation of United
12 States Patent No. 7,584,856. *www.countyofsb.org/1390/Welcome-from-Deputy-*
13 *Director*. Wells has continued Defendants’ implementation of the Infringing Product
14 even after receiving and acknowledging Plaintiff’s August 23, 2022 written notice of
15 patent infringement.

16 6. Defendant Mustang Renewable Power Ventures, LLC (“Mustang”) is a
17 California limited liability company with a principal place of business at 17 Corporate
18 Plaza Drive, Suite 200, Newport Beach, California 92660.

19 7. Defendant Van Dyk Baler Corp. d/b/a Van Dyk Recycling Solutions
20 (“VDRS”) is a New York corporation with a principal place of business at 360 MLK
21 Jr. Drive, Norwalk, Connecticut 06854.

22 **JURISDICTION AND VENUE**

23 8. This Court has subject matter jurisdiction pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1331
24 and 1338(a).

25 9. This Court has personal jurisdiction over Defendants. Defendants Wells
26 and Mustang are domiciled and regularly conduct business, including acts of patent
27
28

1 infringement complained about herein, in the State of California and this judicial
2 district. Defendant Mustang is organized as a limited liability company under the laws
3 of the State of California. Defendant VDRS contracted with the co-Defendants to
4 provide and support the Infringing Product in this judicial district in order to service
5 the waste handling needs of California residents within this judicial district.
6 Defendants have performed and continue to perform in California the legal violations
7 described herein from within this judicial district, and they derive revenues and value
8 therefrom in furtherance of their purposeful availment of the privileges and benefits
9 of conducting business in California within this judicial district.

10 10. This Court may exercise jurisdiction over Defendants on the grounds that,
11 *inter alia*, the Defendants conduct as alleged herein were done in this judicial district,
12 caused and continue to cause injury to Plaintiff from this judicial district, and to harm
13 the intellectual property, value, and good will associated with Plaintiff's patent rights
14 in this judicial district.

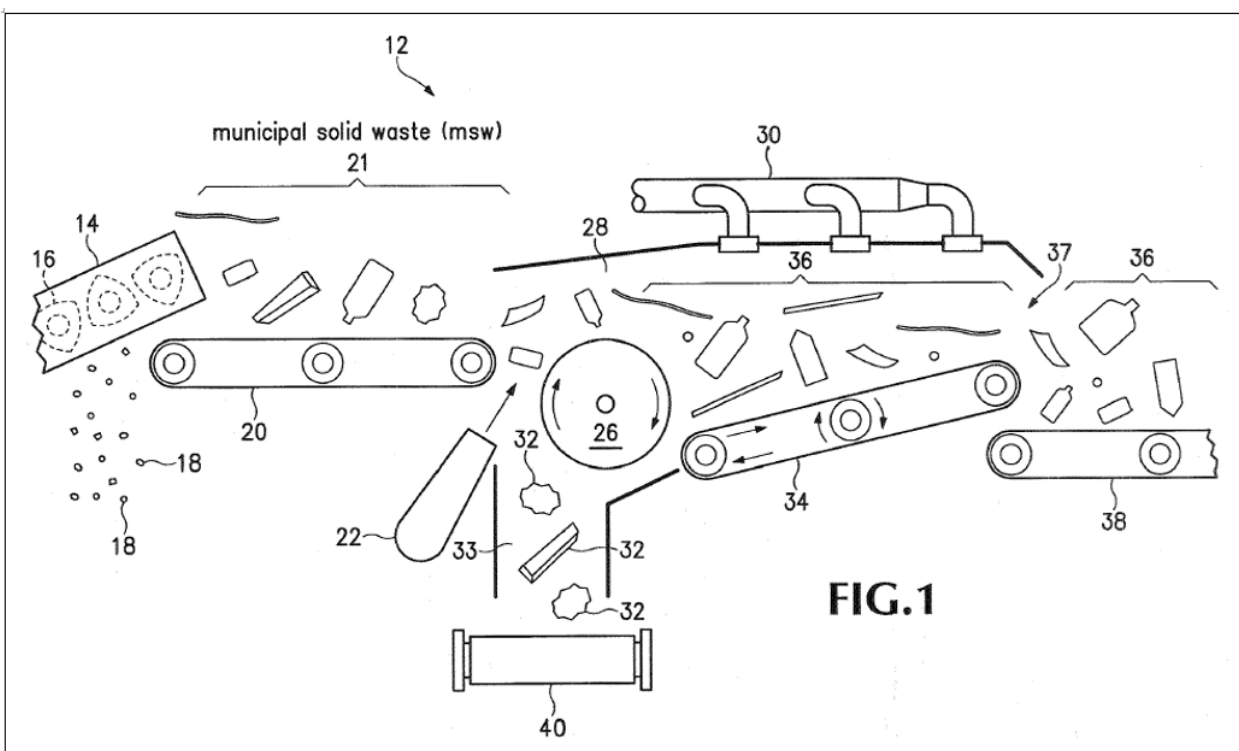
15 11. Venue is proper under 28 U.S.C. § 1391(b) and (c) and 1400(b) because
16 Defendants either reside in this judicial district or made, used, sold, and offered to sell
17 the Infringing Product within this judicial district.

18 **PLAINTIFF'S PATENT RIGHTS**

19 12. Plaintiff develops, sells, and implements industrial solutions for handling,
20 processing, and recovering waste and recycling materials, including MSW in the form
21 of paper, cardboard, plastic, glass, and metal. www.bulkhandlingsystems.com.
22 Plaintiff is an industry leader in innovating technologies to increase the efficiency of
23 complex sorting facilities as a means to increase recovery yield from MSW streams
24 and to reduce the amount of waste in landfills.

25 13. Plaintiff has invented air separation systems that separate and reclaim
26 recyclable materials from MSW using a combination of separator screens, blowers,
27
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1 air chambers, conveyors, drums, frames, shafts, discs, and specific spatial
2 configurations, for example, as shown below.



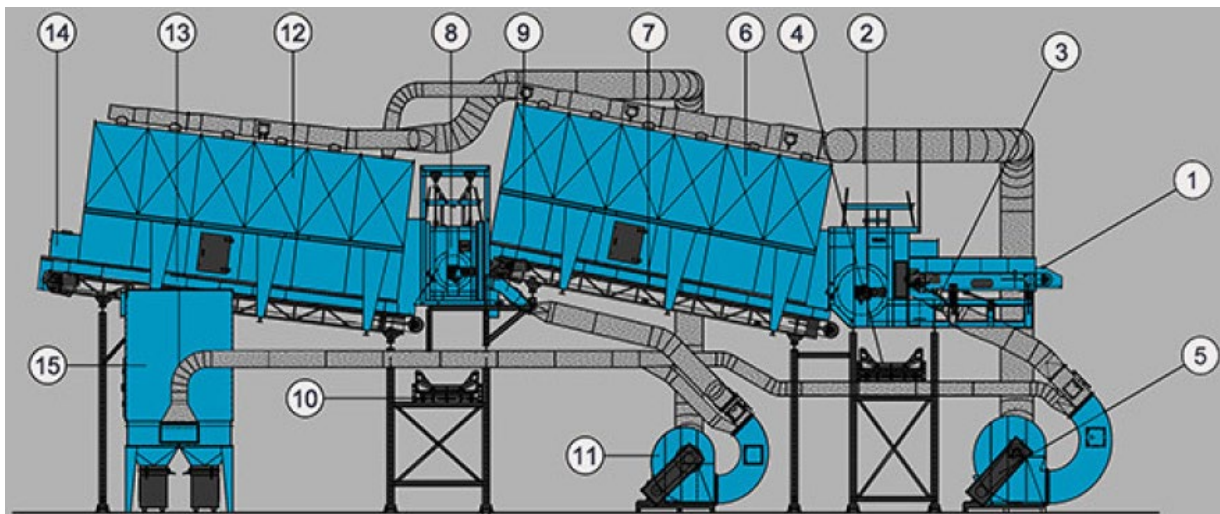
15 14. On September 8, 2009, the United States Patent and Trademark Office
16 (“USPTO”) duly and lawfully issued United States Patent No. 7,584,856 (“the ‘856
17 Patent” or “patent-in-suit”) entitled “Air Separation of Recyclable Material” to
18 recognize Plaintiff’s inventions. Plaintiff has complied with all legal requirements
19 such that the ‘856 Patent is valid and enforceable. A true and correct copy of the ‘856
20 Patent is attached as Exhibit 1.

21 15. Plaintiff owns all rights, title, and interest in the ‘856 Patent, including
22 all rights to make, use, sell, offer for sale, and import products and systems that
23 practice the claims of the patent-in-suit. Plaintiff also owns the exclusive right and
24 standing to enforce and prosecute actions for infringement against and to recover
25 damages and other remedies from infringers of the ‘856 Patent.

26 16. Plaintiff sells products that embody the claims of the ‘856 Patent.
27 Defendants have no license or authorization to practice the technology of the ‘856 Patent.
28

DEFENDANT’S INFRINGEMENT

1
2 17. Defendants make, use, sell, and offer to sell air separation systems that
3 separate and reclaim recyclable materials from MSW in violation of the '856 Patent.
4 Defendant Wells, on behalf of RR&WMD, solicited and contracted with Defendants
5 Mustang and VDRS to install and operate the Infringing Product at the *MSW*
6 *Recycling and Waste Management Facility* in Santa Barbara County, California,
7 which she oversees and administers.



1 Defendants have installed and operated the Infringing Product at the *MSW Recycling*
2 *and Waste Management Facility* in Santa Barbara County, California using the
3 elements described in Claims 8 and 11 of the '856 Patent.

4 18. Upon learning about Defendants' infringement, Plaintiff provided
5 written notice to Defendants regarding the '856 Patent and Plaintiff's claims of
6 infringement, including, without limitation, by sending demand letters regarding
7 Plaintiff's patent rights and claims of infringement on January 7, 2022 and February
8 10, 2022 (to Defendant VDRS) and August 23, 2022 (to Defendant Wells).

9 19. Defendant acknowledged the demand letters in responses dated January
10 24, 2022 (from Defendant VDRS) and August 30, 2022 (from Defendant Wells), but
11 they have continued to make, use, sell, and offer to sell the Infringing Products without
12 any legal justification. All Defendants have maintained communication with each
13 other regarding Plaintiff's claims of infringement of the '856 patent and have
14 coordinated their actions to continue using the Infringing Products.

15 20. Notwithstanding Defendants' actual pre-suit knowledge of the patent-in-
16 suit, they have not offered any explanation for why they believe they have the right to
17 practice the patented inventions in violation of Plaintiff's '856 Patent. Plaintiff
18 warned Defendant VDRS that such ongoing infringement would be interpreted as
19 evidence of willful patent infringement if Defendants did not cease and desist the
20 infringing conduct. Plaintiff warned Defendant Wells that a failure to respond
21 reasonably to Plaintiff's cease and desist correspondence would be construed as a tacit
22 admission by Defendant regarding Plaintiff's claims of patent infringement.
23 Defendants persist in their course of conduct without explanation.

24
25 **COUNT I: PATENT INFRINGEMENT**
26 **(35 U.S.C. § 271)**

27 21. Plaintiff repeats and realleges the allegations set forth above as if fully
28 restated herein.

1 22. Defendants make, use, sell, and offer to sell the Infringing Products in
2 this judicial district.

3 23. Defendants have been infringing — directly, jointly, contributorily, and
4 by inducement — at least claims 8 and 11 of the '856 Patent literally and under the
5 doctrine of equivalents.

6 24. The Infringing Products compete with Plaintiff's own products and
7 closely imitate the technology of the patent-in-suit.

8 25. Defendants' acts constitute a violation of United States Patent laws. 35
9 U.S.C §§ 271, *et seq.*

10 26. Defendant's patent infringement has been knowing and willful.

11 **PRAYER FOR RELIEF**

12 WHEREFORE, Plaintiff prays for judgment against Defendant as follows:

13 1. That Defendants have infringed the patent-in-suit;

14 2. That Defendants (along with their employees, officers, directors, agents,
15 and affiliates) and all of those in active concert and participation with any of the
16 foregoing be temporarily restrained, preliminarily enjoined, and permanently enjoined
17 from any direct, indirect, and joint infringement — whether literal or under the
18 doctrine of equivalents — of the patent-in-suit;

19 3. That Defendants are liable to Plaintiff for an award of actual damages in
20 an amount to be determined at trial;

21 4. That enhanced damages be awarded to Plaintiff such that any award of
22 damages is trebled due to Defendants' willful patent infringement;

23 5. That Plaintiff be awarded pre-judgment and post-judgment interest;

24 6. That the case be declared exceptional under, *inter alia*, 35 U.S.C. § 285
25 such that Plaintiff is awarded its attorneys' fees and costs incurred in this action; and
26

27 ///

EXHIBIT 1



US007584856B2

(12) **United States Patent**
Miller et al.

(10) **Patent No.:** **US 7,584,856 B2**
 (45) **Date of Patent:** **Sep. 8, 2009**

(54) **AIR SEPARATION OF RECYCLABLE MATERIAL**

(75) Inventors: **Steve Miller**, Eugene, OR (US); **Roy Miller**, Eugene, OR (US)

(73) Assignee: **Emerging Acquisitions, LLC**, Eugene, OR (US)

(*) Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this patent is extended or adjusted under 35 U.S.C. 154(b) by 0 days.

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Primary Examiner—Patrick H Mackey
Assistant Examiner—Terrell H Matthews
 (74) *Attorney, Agent, or Firm*—Stolowitz Ford Cowger LLP

(21) Appl. No.: **11/556,582**

(22) Filed: **Nov. 3, 2006**

(65) **Prior Publication Data**

US 2008/0105597 A1 May 8, 2008

(51) **Int. Cl.**
B07B 4/00 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.** **209/139.1**; 209/132; 209/133;
 209/147

(58) **Field of Classification Search** 209/132,
 209/133, 139.1, 142, 147
 See application file for complete search history.

(56) **References Cited**

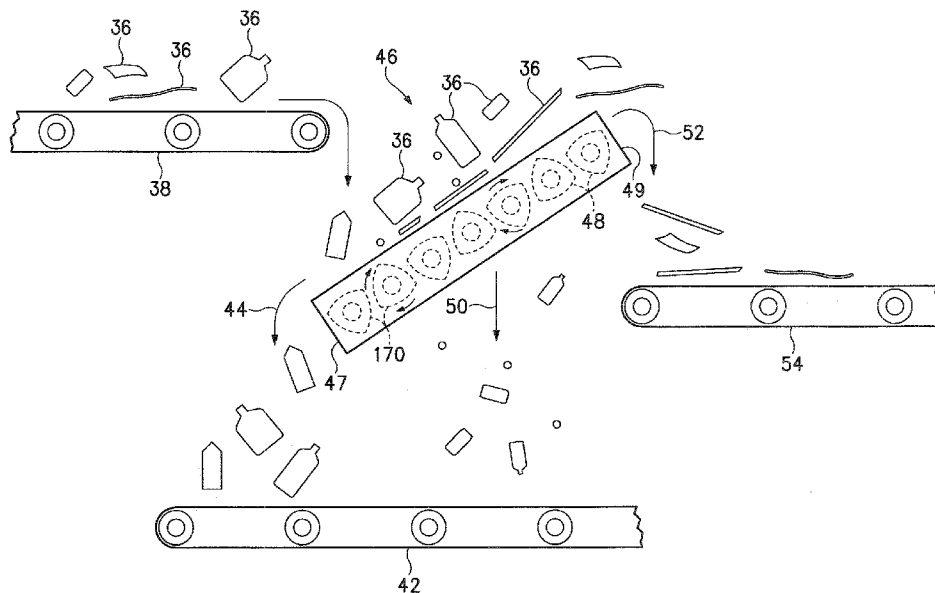
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

A separation system includes an air separator that in one embodiment primarily receives Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) containing relatively light MSW recyclable materials such as paper, cardboard, plastic containers, and/or metal containers. The air separator blows the relatively light MSW recyclable materials up through a chamber and onto a first conveyer while the other relatively heavy MSW material drops down a chute onto a second conveyer. A separation screen receives the relatively light MSW recyclable materials from the air separator and separates the relatively flat paper and cardboard from the plastic and metal containers.

15 Claims, 7 Drawing Sheets



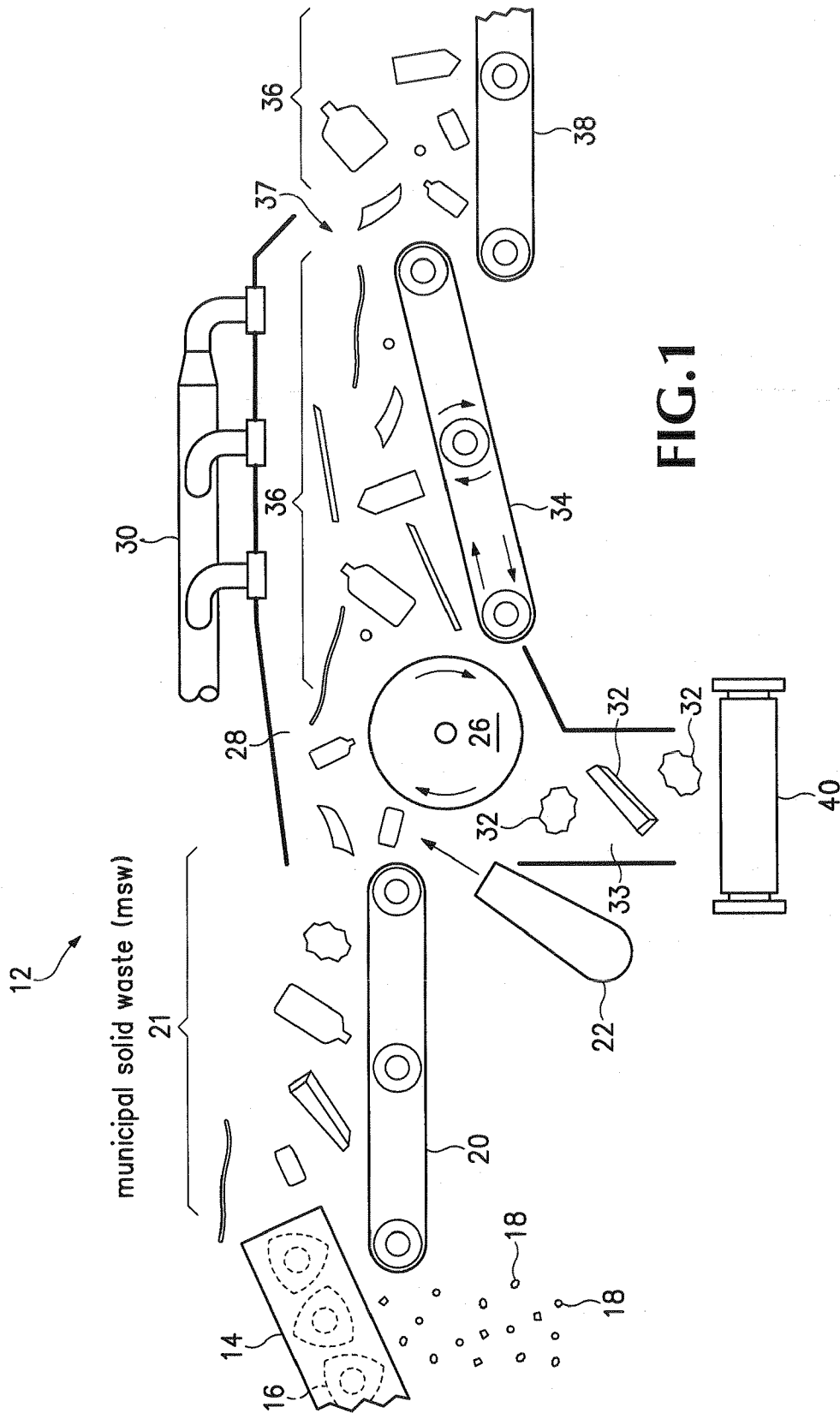
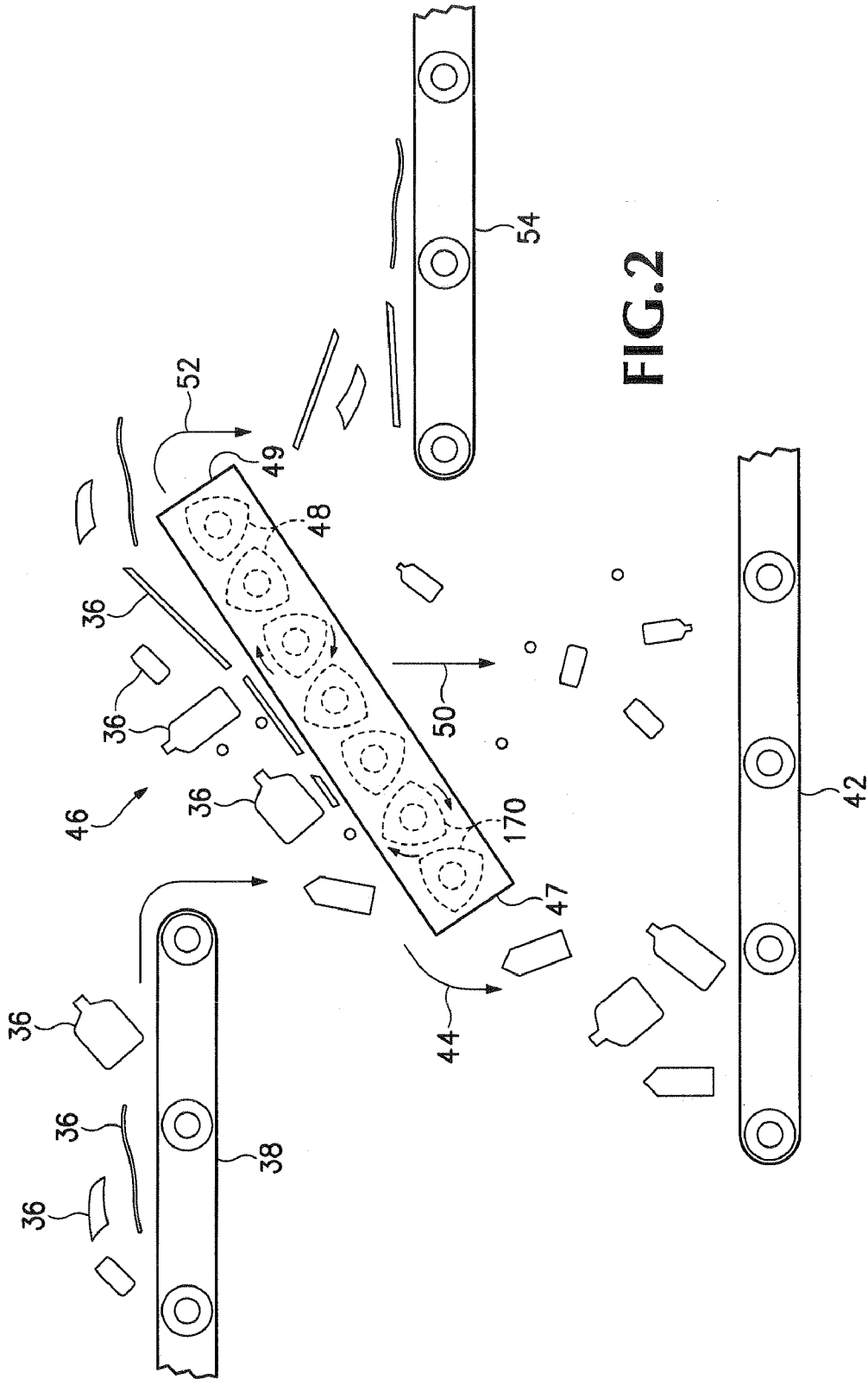


FIG. 1



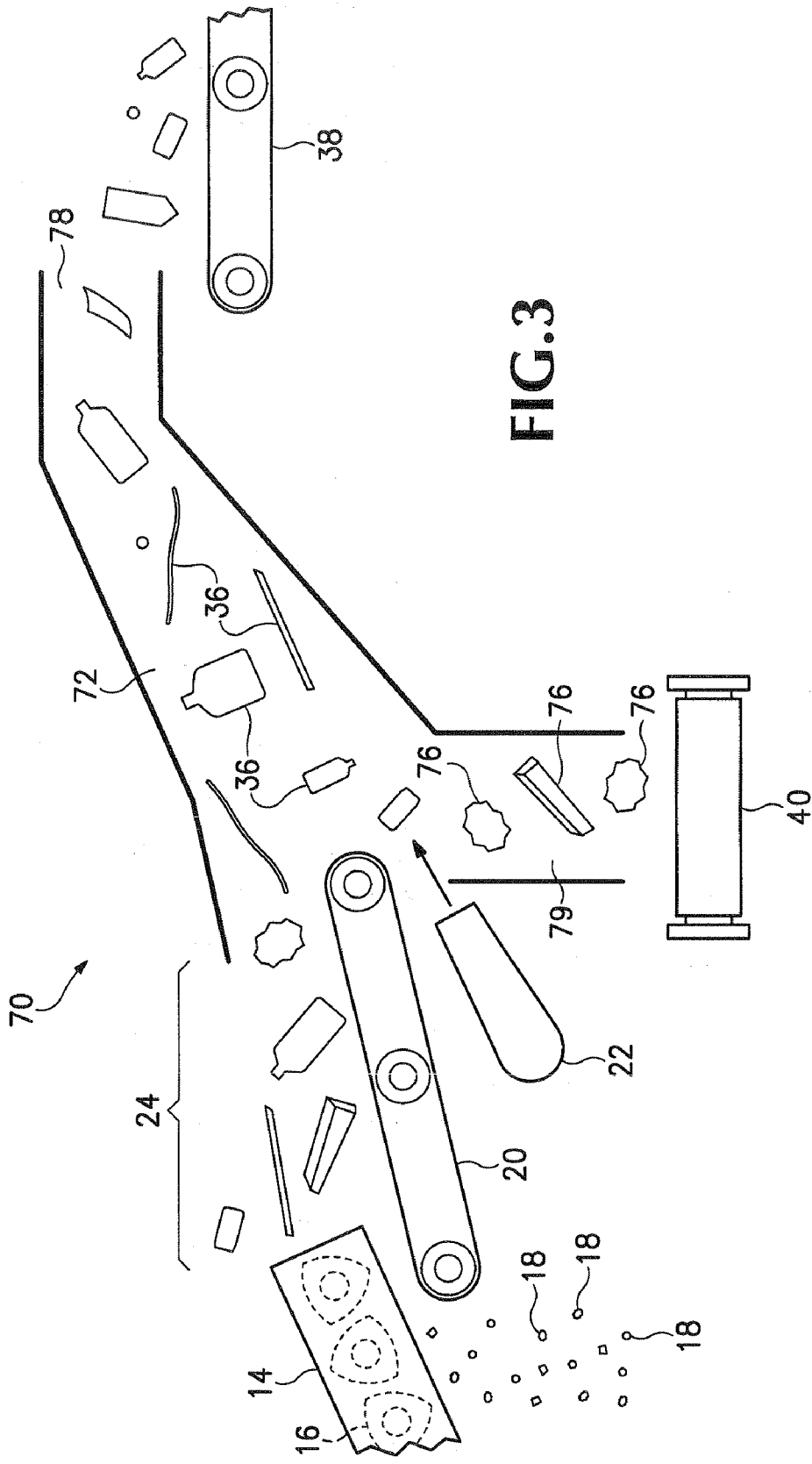


FIG. 3

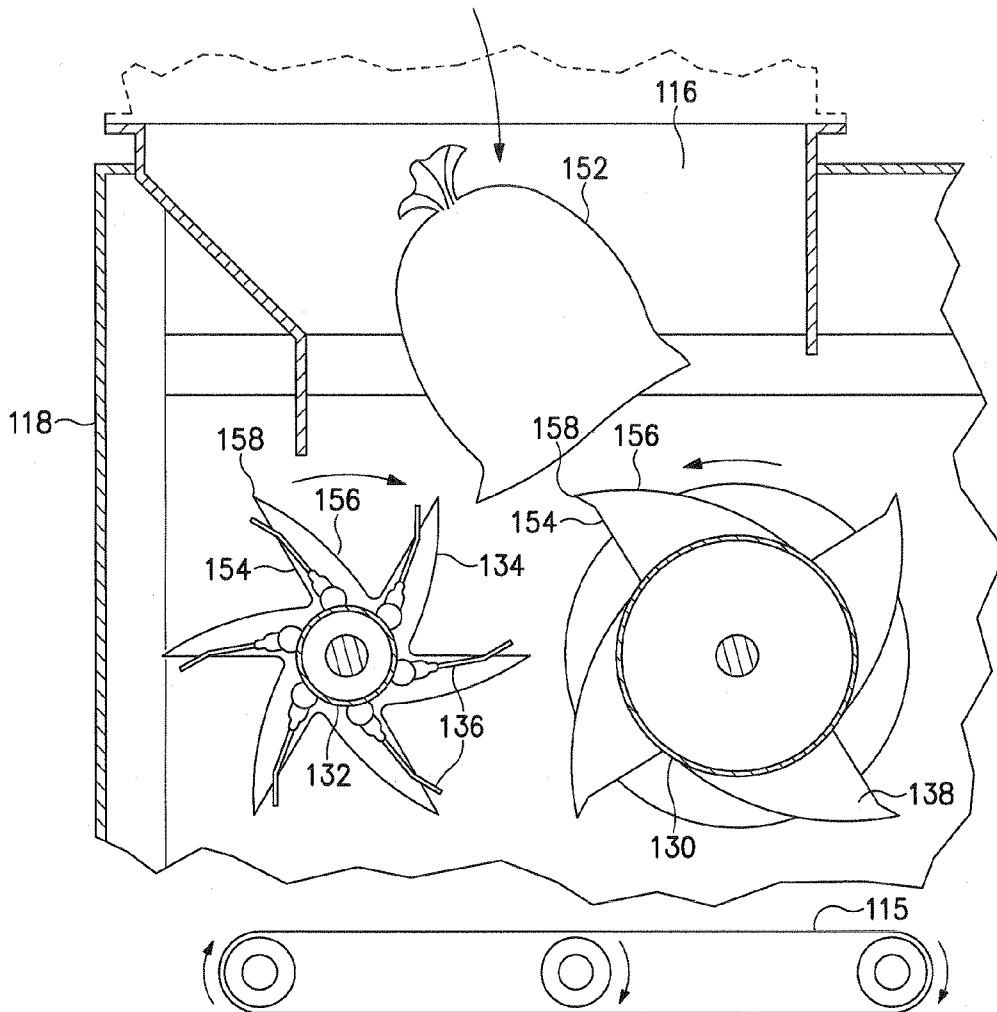


FIG. 4

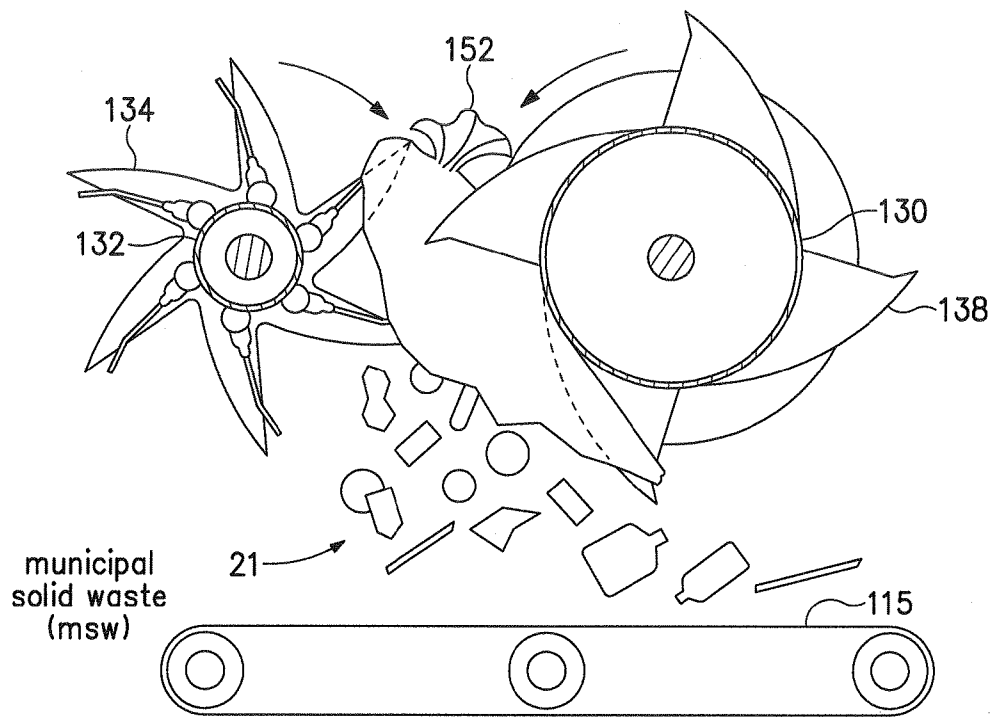


FIG.5

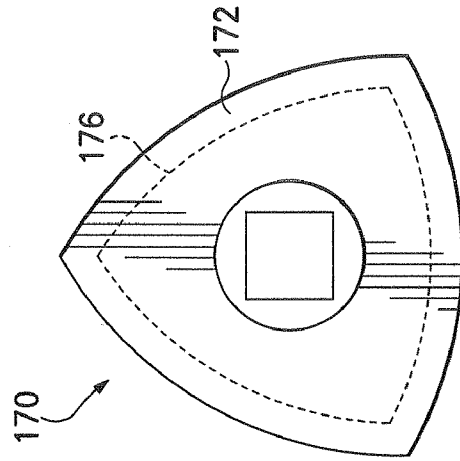


FIG. 6C

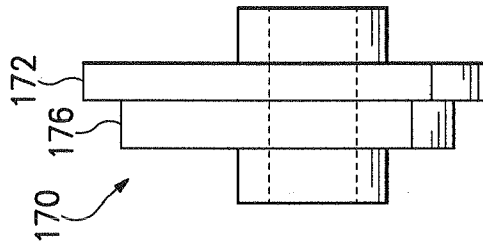


FIG. 6B

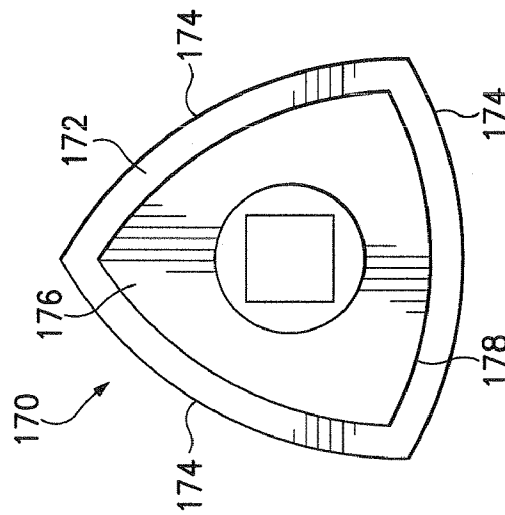


FIG. 6A

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AIR SEPARATION OF RECYCLABLE MATERIAL

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

This invention relates to separating various recyclable materials from Municipal Solid Waste (MSW).

2. Description of the Related Art

Disc or roll screens are frequently used as part of a multi-stage material separating system. Disc screens are used in the materials handling industry for screening large flows of materials to remove certain items of desired dimensions. In particular, disc screens are used for classifying what is normally considered debris or residual materials. This debris may consist of soil, aggregate, asphalt, concrete, wood, biomass, ferrous and nonferrous metal, plastic, ceramic, paper, cardboard, or other products or materials recognized as debris throughout consumer, commercial and industrial markets. The function of the disc screen is to separate the materials fed into it by size. The size classification may be adjusted to meet different applications.

Disc screens generally have a screening bed having a series of rotating spaced parallel shafts, each of which has a longitudinal series of concentric screen discs separated by spacers which interdigitate with the screen discs of the adjacent shafts. The relationship of the discs and spacers on one shaft and spacers on each adjacent shaft form an opening generally known in the industry as the InterFacial Opening or "IFO". The IFOs permit only material of acceptable size to pass downwardly through the rotating disc bed. The acceptable sized material which drops through the IFO is commonly referred to in the industry as "accepts" or "unders".

The discs are all driven to rotate in a common direction from the infeed end of the screen bed to the outfeed or discharge end of the bed. Thus, materials which are larger than the IFO, referred to in the industry as "overs", will be advanced on the bed to the outfeed end of the bed.

It may be desirable to separate certain types of recyclable Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) from other types of recyclable or non-recyclable waste. For example, recyclable MSW materials may include paper, old corrugated cardboard (OCC); and plastic, aluminum, steel, and glass containers. These recyclable materials may need to be separated from other types of waste that may include wood, concrete, rocks, etc. However, the recyclable MSW paper, cardboard, and containers may have sizes and/or shapes similar to other types of MSW waste. Thus, existing disc screen systems that separate materials solely according to size may not effectively separate certain MSW recyclable materials.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

A separation system includes an air separator that, in one embodiment, primarily receives Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) containing a mixture of relatively light MSW recyclable materials such as paper, cardboard, plastic containers, and/or metal containers and relatively heavy MSW such as textiles, food waste, yard debris, etc. The air separator blows the relatively light MSW recyclable materials up through a chamber and onto a first conveyer while the other relatively heavy MSW material drops down a chute onto a second conveyer. A separation screen receives the relatively light MSW recyclable materials from the air separator and separates the relatively flat paper and cardboard from the plastic and metal containers.

2

The foregoing and other objects, features and advantages of the invention will become more readily apparent from the following detailed description of a preferred embodiment of the invention which proceeds with reference to the accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a side view of an air separator used for separating recyclable Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) materials from other MSW material.

FIG. 2 is a side schematic view of a separation screen used for further separating the MSW recyclable materials output from the air separator shown in FIG. 1.

FIG. 3 is an alternative embodiment of the air separator.

FIGS. 4 and 5 show side sectional views of a bag breaker that can be used in combination with the air separators and separation screen shown in FIGS. 1-4.

FIGS. 6A-6C show a front view, side view and perspective view, respectively, of a compound dual-diameter disc that can be used in the separation screen shown in FIG. 2.

FIG. 7 is a top plan view of a separation screen section using the compound disc shown in FIGS. 6A-6C.

FIG. 8 is a top plan view of a separation screen section using the compound disc shown in FIGS. 6A-6C according to another embodiment.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

Recyclable Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) materials include, but are not limited to, fiber material such as newspaper, mixed paper, Old Corrugated Cardboard (OCC), other cardboard and office paper products. Recyclable MSW can also include relatively light plastic containers, aluminum containers, tin containers and other metal containers or shapes. The material in all of these MSW recyclable items are used for making new products that may use the same material as the recycled items. For example, the paper and cardboard fiber material is re-pulped to make new paper, cardboard, or other fiber products. The recyclable MSW PolyEthylene Terephthalate (PET), High Density PolyEthylene (HDPE), PolyVinyl Chloride (PVC), or other plastic containers are shredded and melted into new containers and any other types of plastic products that may not be related to the original recovered product. For example, PET bottles can be used as fiber fill for winter jackets or as fill for mattresses. The recyclable MSW metal containers are separated out for the purpose of making new aluminum, tin, or steel products.

A separation system separates out the recyclable MSW materials from other MSW material and then separates the recyclable MSW fiber materials from the recyclable MSW plastic and metal containers. FIG. 1 shows an air separator 12 that separates out recyclable MSW materials 36 from other MSW material 32. FIG. 2 shows a separation screen 46 that separates the relatively flat recyclable MSW paper and cardboard fiber materials from recyclable MSW containers.

Referring first to FIG. 1, the air separator 12 includes an air chamber 28 that receives MSW 21 from a conveyer 20. In one embodiment, the MSW 21 is the waste typically retrieved from residential and office trash containers and bins. For example, the MSW 21 includes, but is not limited to, food, bottles, paper, cardboard, jars, wrappers, bags, other food containers, or any other items that may be thrown away in a home or office.

A fan 22 pulls relatively light recyclable MSW 36 over the top of a drum 26 into the air chamber 28 and onto a conveyer 34. This is accomplished by taking more air out of the air

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chamber 28 than is returned by the fan 22. Heavier MSW waste 32 falls down chute 33 onto a conveyer 40. In one embodiment, the drum 26 rotates to help carry the lighter recyclable MSW items 36 over drum 26 and onto conveyer 34. The recyclable MSW items 36 are carried up through air chamber 28, out opening 37, and dropped onto a conveyer 38.

The light recyclable MSW materials 36 may include newspaper, junk mail, office paper products, cardboard; plastic bottles, jugs, and other plastic containers; and aluminum, tin, or steel cans and other metal containers. The light materials 36 might also include plastic film.

The heavier MSW material 32 can include rocks, concrete, food waste, wood, or any other type of material that has a relatively heavier weight than the recyclable MSW materials 36. Alternatively, some of the MSW material 32 may have weights comparable with the weight of the lighter recyclable MSW items 36. However, the combination of weight and a relatively small surface area may prevent sufficient air pressure to be produced underneath some of the materials 32, preventing these materials from being blown into air chamber 28. These items also fall down through chute 33 onto conveyer 40.

There may be some recyclable items in heavy MSW 32. However, the majority of the recyclable MSW items 36 referred to above that include paper and cardboard fiber materials and relatively light plastic and metal containers are typically blown over drum 26 and carried by conveyer 34 through air chamber 28 and out the opening 37.

The air flow inside of chamber 28 promotes the movement and circulation of the lighter recyclable MSW items 36 over the top of drum 26 and out of the opening 37. The fan 22 can be connected to air vents 30 located on the top of chamber 28 in a substantially closed system arrangement. The fan 22 draws the air in air chamber 28 back out through air vents 30 and then re-circulates the air back into air chamber 28. A percentage of the air flow from fan 22 is diverted to an air filter (not shown). This recycling air arrangement reduces the air-pressure in air chamber 28, further promoting the circulation of light recyclable MSW materials 36 over drum 26 and out opening 37.

The negative air arrangement of the air recirculation system can also confine dust and other smaller particulates within the air chamber 28 and air vents 30. A filter (not shown) can further be inserted at the discharge of fan 22 such that a percentage of the air from the fan is diverted to a filter (not shown) to further remove some of the dust generated during the recycling process.

Current air separation systems only separate non-recyclable materials used for shredding and burning from other heavier materials. For example, air separation systems have been used for separating wood from other non-burnable materials such as concrete, rocks, and metal. MSW recyclable materials are already separated out prior to being fed into air separation systems.

Referring to FIG. 2, the light recyclable MSW items 36 are carried along conveyer 38 and dropped onto a separation screen 46. In one embodiment, the separation screen 46 includes dual-diameter discs 170 arranged to form particular openings between adjacent disc rows. The discs 140 have arched shapes that when rotated both move the items 36 up the screen 46 while at the same time vibrating the light items 36 up and down in a vertical direction. However, other types of separation screens can also be used.

The combination of gravity, the upwardly inclined angle of separation screen 46, and the shape, arrangement and rotation of discs 170, cause some of the light recyclable MSW items 44 to fall back down over a bottom end 47 of separation screen

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46 onto a conveyer 42. Typically, these MSW recyclable items 44 include containers such as milk jugs, plastic bottles, beer cans, soda cans, or any other type of container having a shape and large enough size to roll backwards off the bottom end 47 of screen 46.

Other recyclable MSW items 50 drop through openings (IFO's) formed between the discs 170 while being carried up separation screen 46. The items 50 falling through the openings in separation screen 46 also fall onto conveyer 42 and typically also include plastic and metal containers. For example, the items 50 may be smaller volume containers. In one embodiment, the opening is 2"x2" but can be larger or smaller depending on the screen design.

The remaining recyclable MSW items 52 are carried over a top end 49 of separation screen 46 and dropped onto a conveyer 54. The recyclable MSW items 52 often include items with relatively flat and wide surface areas such as paper, cardboard, flattened containers, and other types of fiber materials. These relatively flat recyclable MSW items have less tendency to topple backwards over the bottom end 47 of separation screen 46 and, further, have a wide enough surface area to travel over the openings between discs 170.

Thus, the combination of the air separator 12 in FIG. 1 and the screen separator 46 in FIG. 2 first separate relatively light recyclable MSW items 36 from other MSW material 32 (FIG. 1) and then further separate the recyclable MSW plastic and metal containers 44 and 50 from the recyclable MSW paper and cardboard fiber material 52 (FIG. 2).

Referring briefly back to FIG. 1, another separation screen 14, trommel, or some other type of separation system is used for removing small items from the MSW 21. In one embodiment, the screen 14 includes discs 16 arranged to form openings of the same or various sizes that allow smaller materials 18, alternatively referred to as "fines", to drop through the screen 14. These smaller materials 18 can include small rocks, dirt, etc., that might otherwise be blown against different parts of the air separator 12 possibly damaging, or at the least, increasing the wear and tear on the air separator 12.

FIG. 3 shows an alternative embodiment of the air separator. An air separator 70 does not use a drum and relies solely on the air pressure generated by fan 22 to pull the light recyclable MSW materials 36 through air chamber 72, out opening 78, and onto conveyer 38. The heavier MSW materials 76 fall down chute 79 onto conveyer 40.

Bag Breaker

The air separation systems shown in FIGS. 1-3 can be combined with a bag breaker system shown in part in FIG. 4. The bag breaker is described in detail in U.S. Pat. No. 5,484,247, which is herein incorporated by reference.

FIG. 4 shows a partial front section view showing cylinders 132 and 130 prior to receiving a plastic bag 152. The fins 134 and 138 are spaced radially about cylinders 132 and 130, respectively. Both fins 134 and 138 each comprise a first side 154 extending substantially perpendicular from the cylinder up to a fin tip 158. A second concaved side 156 extends from a substantially tangential relationship with the cylinder up to the fin tip 158. The first and second sides of each fin 138 on cylinder 130 are shaped in substantially the same manner on the fins 134 on cylinder 132 except that the concaved side on fins 134 are sloped at a greater angle.

Each fin on cylinder 130 has a tip 158 with a radius of approximately $\frac{3}{16}$ ths inches. Each fin 134 and 138 is approximately between one inch and one and one-half inches thick. A motor rotates cylinder 132 in a clockwise direction and the same or another motor rotates cylinder 130 in an opposite counter clockwise direction.

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After traveling along a conveyer (not shown), bag 152 is deposited through receiving chute 116 onto the top of fins 134 and 138. The shape, thickness and rotational speed of the fins allow the bag 152 to be ripped open as opposed to being shred open. For example, if too thin, the fins will slice bag 152 into a net and not allow all the trash in the bag to fall out. In addition, if bag 152 is shredded, little pieces of the bag will drop onto the conveyer 115 making separation of the bag 152 from the other trash difficult. Cylinder 132, in one embodiment, is rotated at between 2-10 RPMs and cylinder 30 is rotated up to six times faster than cylinder 132.

Upon falling into chute 116, bag 152 is hooked by fins 134. Fins 134 serve to slow the speed of bag 152 while descending through chute 116. The clockwise rotation of fins 134 move bag 152 to the right and downward, presenting the bag to fins 138.

The second set of fins 138 rotate in a counter clockwise direction with tip 158 angled toward bag 152. Tip 158 hooks into a second location on bag 152. The relatively blunt tip 158 on fins 138 hooks into bag 152 without slicing through the plastic material. Cylinder 130 is rotated at a substantially greater speed than cylinder 132. Thus, fins 138 pull down on bag 152 much faster than fins 134 allow a portion of bag 152 to descend. Thus, fins 138 and 134 stretch apart different locations of bag 152 until the bag 152 eventually tears open.

Referring to FIG. 5, fins 134 and 138 stretch the plastic bag 152 until a large tear is created that allows all the trash 21 to fall out. Cylinders 130 and 132 are spaced a sufficient distance apart so that the bottles, cans and other Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) 21 can fall between the two cylinders onto conveyer 115. Because the bag 152 is torn and not shredded, the bag often remains in substantially one piece.

The MSW 21 is carried by the conveyer 115 to the screen 14 previously shown in FIG. 1. The unique combination of the bag breaker shown in FIGS. 4 and 5 with the air separation system described above in FIGS. 1-3 allow the MSW 21 to first be automatically removed from plastic bags, then the light recyclable MSW materials separated from other MSW material, and finally the recyclable fiber material to be separated from recyclable containers.

Compound Discs

FIGS. 6A-6C show the compound disc 170 from FIG. 2 in more detail and includes a primary disc 172 having three arched sides 174. A secondary disc 176 extends from a side face of the primary disc 172 and also has three arched sides 178. The outside perimeter of the secondary disc 176 is smaller than the outside perimeter of the primary disc 172 and in one embodiment is approximately twice as wide as the width of primary disc 172. The compound disc 170 is described in U.S. Pat. No. 5,960,964, which is herein incorporated by reference.

During rotation, the arched shape of the primary disc 172 and the secondary disc 176 maintain a substantially constant spacing with similar shaped discs on adjacent shafts. However, the different relative size between the primary disc 172 and the secondary disc 176 eliminate secondary slots that normally exist between adjacent shafts. In one embodiment, the compound disc 170 is made from a unitary piece of rubber. The rubber material grips onto certain types and shapes of materials providing a more effective screening process.

FIG. 7 shows a portion of the screen 46 previously shown in FIG. 2 and includes a first shaft 182 and a second shaft 184 mounted to a frame (FIG. 2) in a substantially parallel relationship. A set of primary discs 172 and associated secondary discs 176 are mounted on the first shaft 182 and separated by

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spacers 175. A second set of primary discs 172 are mounted on the second shaft 184 in lateral alignment on shaft 184 with secondary discs 176 on the first shaft 182. Secondary discs 176 mounted on the second shaft 184 are aligned laterally with the primary discs 172 on the first shaft 182.

The primary discs 172 on the first shaft 182 and the secondary discs 176 on the second shaft 184 maintain a substantially constant spacing during rotation. The secondary discs 176 on the first shaft 182 and the primary discs 172 on the second shaft 184 also maintain a substantially constant perimeter spacing during rotation.

The alternating alignment of the primary discs 172 with the secondary discs 176 both laterally across each shaft and longitudinally between adjacent shafts eliminate the rectangular shaped secondary slots that would normally extend laterally across the entire width of the screen 46 between discs on adjacent shafts. Since large thin materials, such as paper and cardboard can no longer unintentionally pass through these secondary slots, these materials can be carried along the screen 46 and deposited in the correct location with other recyclable MSW fiber materials.

The compound discs 170 are shown as having a triangular profile with arched sides. However, the compound discs can have any number of sides, such as four sides or five sides, and any shape. In one embodiment, the primary disc 172 and the associated secondary disc 176 are formed from the same piece of rubber. However, the primary discs and associated secondary discs can also be formed from separate pieces of rubber. The primary and secondary discs may also be formed from a unitary piece of metal or from separate pieces of metal.

FIG. 8 shows an alternative embodiment of the dual diameter disc. The primary discs 172 and secondary discs 176 are separate pieces formed from either rubber or metal. The primary discs 172 are mounted laterally across the shaft 182 between secondary discs 176 and separated by spacers 175. The primary discs 172 are mounted laterally across shaft 184 and aligned with secondary discs 176 on shaft 182. In turn, the secondary discs 176 on shaft 184 are aligned with primary discs 172 on shaft 182.

The different sizes and alignment of the discs on the adjacent shafts 182 and 184 create a stair-step shaped spacing laterally between the discs on the two shafts. Different spacing between the primary discs 172 and secondary discs 176, as well as the size and shapes of the primary and secondary discs, can be varied according to the types of materials being separated.

For example, the dual diameter disc system shown in FIGS. 6-8 can be used in separation screen 46 in FIG. 2. The distance between adjacent compound discs 170 in FIG. 8, or the distance between the primary and secondary discs 176 and 172 in FIG. 8, are selected in combination with the distance between shafts 182 and 184 to form openings 190. The spaces or openings 190 are sized to allow the containers 50 in FIG. 2 to drop through the screen 46 while other relatively flat and wide fiber material is carried up the screen 46 and dropped onto conveyer 54. In one embodiment, openings 190 are 2"x2" but other dimensions may also be used.

The compound discs shown in FIGS. 7 and 8 can also be used in the screen 14 shown in FIG. 1 to prescreen the MSW material prior to being fed into the air separator 12. The openings 190 for prescreen 14 in FIG. 1 is a 2" minus which has a different dimension than 2"x2". The size of openings in prescreen 14 can vary according to the market for the fines material which can differ according to region.

Having described and illustrated the principles of the invention in a preferred embodiment thereof, it should be apparent that the invention may be modified in arrangement

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and detail without departing from such principles. We claim all modifications and variation coming within the spirit and scope of the following claims.

The invention claimed is:

1. A separation system for separating recyclable materials from Municipal Solid Waste, comprising:

a first separation screen configured to receive Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) including recyclable MSW items and other heavier MSW materials,

the recyclable MSW items used for making new products that use the same materials as the recyclable items and including non-shredded paper, non-shredded cardboard, non-shredded plastic containers, and non-shredded metal containers,

the first separation screen further configured to remove a first group of smaller items from the MSW and carry remaining MSW over a top end;

an air separator including an air chamber elongated in an upward diagonal direction and including a first opening at a first end and a second opening at a second opposite end, the remaining MSW dropped into the air chamber through the first opening after the first group of smaller items are removed by the first separation screen,

a first conveyor located at least partially within the air chamber and having a conveying direction oriented substantially parallel with the upward diagonal direction of the air chamber,

a fan configured to blow the non-shredded paper, non-shredded cardboard, non-shredded plastic containers, and non-shredded metal containers dropped into the first opening in the air chamber in an upward diagonal direction through the air chamber so that the non-shredded paper, non-shredded cardboard, non-shredded plastic containers, and non-shredded metal containers land onto different locations on the first conveyor as the first conveyor conveys the non-shredded paper, non-shredded cardboard, non-shredded plastic containers, and non-shredded metal containers out through the second opening at the opposite end of the air chamber while most of the other heavier MSW drops down from the first end of the air chamber, through a third opening in the air chamber, and onto a second conveyor; and

a second separation screen configured to receive the non-shredded paper, non-shredded cardboard, non-shredded plastic containers, and non-shredded metal containers separated from most of the other MSW and conveyed out of the second opening in the air chamber by the first conveyor, the second separation screen including

a frame;

multiple shafts mounted on the frame; and

discs mounted on the shafts that form openings between the discs on adjacent shafts, the discs and openings between the discs sized to cause the non-shredded plastic containers and non-shredded metal containers to drop off of a back end of the second separation screen and cause other non-shredded plastic containers and non-shredded metal containers to fall between the discs in the second separation screen while carrying the non-shredded paper and non-shredded cardboard over a top end of the second separation screen so that the non-shredded paper and non-shredded cardboard are substantially separated from the non-shredded plastic containers and non-shredded metal containers.

2. The separation system according to claim 1 wherein the fan blows most of the recyclable MSW items up over a rotating drum and through the air chamber while the other heavier

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MSW materials drop vertically downward through the third opening and onto the second conveyor.

3. The separation system according to claim 1 wherein the second separation screen is inclined so that at least some of the plastic and metal containers roll back off a bottom end when the relatively light recyclable MSW materials are dropped by the first conveyor onto the separation screen.

4. The separation system according to claim 1 wherein the second separation screen includes:

a first set of compound discs mounted on a first set of shafts having primary discs and smaller secondary discs located on sides of the primary discs;

a second set of shafts located in between the first set of shafts; and

a second set of compound discs mounted on the second set of shafts also having primary discs and smaller secondary discs located on the sides of the primary discs,

the first set of compound discs on the first set of shafts aligned with the second set of compound discs on the second set of shafts such that the first set of compound discs at least partially overlap with the second set of compound discs.

5. The separation system according to claim 4 where the first and second set of compound discs are arranged to form the openings that allow the plastic and metal containers to drop off of the back end of the second separation screen or through the second separation screen while the paper and cardboard are carried up and over a top end of the second separation screen.

6. The separation system according to claim 1 including a bag opener that automatically opens up bags containing the MSW and deposits the MSW onto a conveyor that either directly or indirectly drops the MSW into the first separation screen.

7. The separation system according to claim 5 wherein the bag opener includes:

a first cylinder having a first set of fins that protrude from an outside surface and hook a first location on the bags;

a second cylinder having a second set of fins that protrude from an outside surface and hook a second location on the bags; and

one or more motors that rotate the first and second set of fins in opposite directions and rotate the first cylinder at a slower speed than the second cylinder so that the second set of fins pull the second location of the bag apart from the first location thereby tearing the bag open and allowing the MSW inside the bag to fall out.

8. A method for separating recyclable materials from Municipal Solid Waste, comprising:

receiving Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) including recyclable MSW items that are used for making new products that use the same materials as the recyclable items and other heavier MSW materials, the recyclable MSW items including non-shredded paper, non-shredded cardboard, non-shredded plastic containers, and non-shredded metal containers that have different shapes and weights compared with at least some of the other MSW materials;

blowing all of the MSW in an upward diagonal direction as the MSW is being dropped into an air chamber so that the non-shredded paper, non-shredded cardboard, non-shredded plastic containers, and non-shredded metal containers are blown in an upward diagonal direction through the air chamber that is parallel with an upward diagonal conveying direction for a first conveyor so that the non-shredded paper, non-shredded cardboard, non-shredded plastic containers, and non-shredded metal

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containers land onto the first conveyor as the first conveyor conveys the non-shredded paper, non-shredded cardboard, non-shredded plastic containers, and non-shredded metal containers in an upward diagonal direction as the other MSW drops vertically downward onto a second conveyor located in front of the first conveyor;

5 moving the non-shredded paper, non-shredded cardboard, non-shredded plastic containers, and non-shredded metal containers that have been separated from the other MSW from the first conveyor onto a separation screen; and

10 moving the non-shredded paper, non-shredded cardboard, non-shredded plastic containers, and non-shredded metal containers up the separation screen so that the non-shredded plastic containers and non-shredded metal containers drop off of a back end of the separation screen while the non-shredded paper and non-shredded cardboard is carried over a top end of the separation screen substantially separating the non-shredded paper and non-shredded cardboard from the non-shredded plastic containers and non-shredded metal containers.

15 **9.** The method according to claim **8** further comprising carrying the MSW over a pre-screen that causes first group of smaller MSW to drop through discs in the pre-screen;

20 dropping the MSW that does not drop through the discs in the pre-screen into the air chamber; and

25 blowing air diagonally up into the MSW as the MSW is being dropped into the air chamber so that the non-shredded paper, non-shredded cardboard, non-shredded plastic containers, and non-shredded metal containers are blown onto the first conveyor while rocks, concrete, food waste, wood and other types of MSW drop vertically downward onto the second conveyor.

30 **10.** The method according to claim **9** further comprising blowing diagonally up into the dropped MSW so that food and other non-recyclable residential and/or business waste continues to drop vertically downward onto the second conveyor.

35 **11.** The method according to claim **8** including blowing the non-shredded paper, non-shredded cardboard, non-shredded plastic containers, and non-shredded metal containers up over a drum and into the air chamber while at the same time rotating the drum to promote the movement of the non-shredded paper, non-shredded cardboard, non-shredded plastic containers, and non-shredded metal containers up into the air chamber.

40 **12.** The method according to claim **8** including: receiving the waste MSW in bags;

45 dropping the bags against a catch mechanism that hooks onto a first portion of the bags and presents the bags to pull fins attached to a cylinder;

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rotating the cylinder causing the pull fins to hook onto a second portion of the bags spaced from the first portion; further rotating the cylinder causing the pull fins to move away from the catch mechanism pulling apart the first and second portions of the bags a sufficient amount to tear the bags open and cause the waste inside the bags to empty out;

dropping at least some of the waste MSW emptied from the bags into the air chamber; and

blowing up on the dropped MSW to separate the recyclable MSW items from the other heavier non-recyclable MSW.

13. The method according to claim **8** including: orienting the separation screen at an angle and then rotating discs in the separation screen so that at least some of the non-shredded plastic containers, and non-shredded metal containers dropped onto the separation screen roll backwards off a bottom end of the separation screen;

arranging the discs in the separation screen to form openings that cause other non-shredded plastic containers, and non-shredded metal containers drop through the openings while being carried up the separation screen; and

arranging the discs so that the recyclable items having the relatively thin and flat shape are carried by the discs over the openings and up and over a top end of the separation screen.

14. The method according to claim **13** including: attaching multiple primary discs and multiple secondary discs on shafts in the separation screen, the secondary discs having a smaller profile than the primary discs;

aligning the primary discs and the secondary discs on the shafts in an alternating order where at least some of the primary discs are aligned with secondary discs on adjacent shafts and secondary discs are aligned with primary discs on adjacent shafts such that non-linear gaps are formed between the aligned discs on adjacent shafts and the openings are formed between adjacent discs on the same shafts,

the non-linear gaps preventing the relatively thin and flat recyclable items from slipping through the discs on adjacent shafts while being carried up the separation screen while at the same time the openings between adjacent discs on the same shafts cause the recyclable containers to fall down through the openings while being carried up the separation screen.

15. The method according to claim **14** including using the primary discs and the secondary discs to agitate the recyclable items in an up and down motion while carrying the recyclable items up the separation screen.

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