
BIOSOLIDS: QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Number 10 in a Series • Prepared by the Virginia Biosolids Council • www.virginiabiosolids.com

Q. Who supports the land application of biosolids?

A. The following are just a few of the officials, agencies and organizations that support the safety and benefits of the land application of biosolids:

- **National Academy of Sciences**

The National Academy of Sciences has reviewed current practices, public health concerns and regulator standards, and has concluded that “the use of these materials in the production of crops for human consumption, when practiced in accordance with existing federal guidelines and regulations, presents negligible risk to the consumer, to crop production and to the environment.”

- **Virginia Lt. Governor Bill Bolling**

Lt. Governor Bolling was interviewed by WLNI-Radio on December 14, 2006, and said that biosolids can be safely applied according to the regulations currently enforced by the Commonwealth of Virginia. The Lt. Governor headed a state commission in 2003 that reaffirmed the state’s reliance upon the determinations by the Environmental Protection Agency. “At that time,” said Bolling, “and at this time, their determination is that biosolids can be safely applied if properly applied, so we adopted that position. On the second issue we decided that in order to have consistency of the laws and regulations involving biosolids across Virginia, that the primary responsibility for regulatory oversight should rest with the state...”

Lt. Governor Bolling earlier drafted legislation that allows counties to adopt a local ordinance (in accordance with state law) that allows the county to hire a biosolids monitor to inspect all biosolids land application within the county and to collect biosolids samples and have them tested. The entire cost of this program is reimbursed by the state.

- **The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency**

“Thirty years ago, thousands of American cities dumped their raw sewage directly into our nation's rivers, lakes, and bays. Today, because of improved wastewater treatment, our waterways have been cleaned up and made safer for recreation and seafood harvest. And, because of the strict Federal and state standards, the treated residuals from wastewater treatment (biosolids) can be safely recycled. Local governments make the decision whether to recycle the biosolids as a fertilizer, incinerate it or bury it in a landfill.”

“Biosolids are the nutrient-rich organic materials resulting from the treatment of sewage sludge (the name for the solid, semisolid or liquid untreated residue generated during the treatment of domestic sewage in a treatment facility). When treated and processed, sewage sludge becomes biosolids which can be safely recycled and applied as fertilizer to sustainably improve and maintain productive soils and stimulate plant growth.”



- **The Virginia Department of Environmental Quality**

“The application of biosolids on agricultural land is beneficial to farmers, municipalities, and the community. Farmers receive benefits from the nutrients and organic matter supplied by biosolids. Land application offers municipalities a safe, cost-effective and environmentally sound alternative to managing their residuals. The community benefits through savings in cost and energy realized by both the farmer and the municipality.”

- **Virginia Cooperative Extension, Department of Crop and Soil Environmental Sciences, Virginia Tech**

“The benefits of recycling biosolids onto agricultural land include providing essential nutrients for crop needs and organic matter for improving soil tilth, water-holding capacity, soil aeration, and an energy source for earthworms and beneficial microorganisms. Crop yields on land amended with biosolids can be as great or greater than land fertilized with only commercial synthetic fertilizers.”

- **The Virginia Farm Bureau**

“We support use of poultry litter, manure, organic fertilizers, and the state regulated application of biosolids as a source of nutrients on farmland and forestland.”

- **The Virginia Association of Counties**

“VACo contends that the land application of biosolids, when conducted properly, provides important benefits to the public and Virginia’s agricultural sector. To reduce risks that might occur because of improper land application, VACo supports an effective statewide program and regulations governing land application of biosolids that protect the environment, public health and safety. VACo also supports the ability of local governments to monitor compliance with such regulations and the ability of local governments to submit recommendations for site-specific conditions into the permitting process..”

- **Virginia Agribusiness Council**

“The Council supports the use of alternative sources of nutrients from biosolids, livestock manures, and poultry litter for meeting crop needs. Such uses should be consistent with current nutrient regulations or guidelines and the Virginia Fertilizer Law.”

- **Virginia Expert Panel on Biosolids**

An Expert Panel created by the Virginia General Assembly concluded in 2008 that the application of biosolids to farmland and forests in the Commonwealth represents little risk to human health or the environment and that biosolids should be viewed as a “resource,” rather than a waste product. While the Panel observed that more research is always desirable, it said that during its 18-month study it had “uncovered no evidence or literature verifying a causal link between biosolids and illness.”

