

BIOSOLIDS NEWS

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Va. Farmers at Hearings Support Biosolids Use

Farmers from throughout Virginia turned out in large numbers to support biosolids use during public hearings recently held by the State Water Control Board and the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). The hearings are one of the final steps in the multi-year development of Virginia's revised comprehensive biosolids regulations.

The regulations are being developed because the DEQ assumed regulatory oversight of the biosolids program from the Department of Health in 2008. The draft regulations were developed using a participatory approach that leveraged input from a Technical Advisory Committee, or TAC. Representatives on the TAC included contractors, wastewater treatment professionals, agricultural interests and other state government representatives. Citizens were invited to participate and did so until their resignation from the TAC process after just a few meetings.

The regulations are currently in public comment, which concludes April 29. Anyone wishing to comment on the regulations may do so by contacting William Norris, P. O. Box 1105, Richmond, VA 23218, (804) 698-4022, fax (804) 698-4347, william.norris@deq.virginia.gov

During the four public hearings – held in Lynchburg, Henrico, Bridgewater and

Bealeton – more than 75 people presented testimony supporting the recycling of biosolids, while just over 20 people called for further restrictions and regulations.

According to Mike McEvoy, Executive Director of the Western Virginia Water Authority and a board member of the Virginia Biosolids Council, the public hearings presented an important opportunity for the State Water Control Board

to hear biosolids perspectives from farmers, which are often overlooked

by policymakers and regulators. "I attended the Lynchburg and Bridgewater hearings and the farmers' testimonies made it clear how much of a challenge it is to successfully farm in today's environment. Hopefully, the Board members gained a new perspective about how their decisions on these regulations have real impacts on real people."

Here are some of the

messages communicated to the Board by Virginia farmers who use biosolids on their farms:

- Many farmers have been using biosolids for 20 or more years, and they said that their practical experience regarding safety and productivity should be a major consideration in Board decisions on proposed regulations.
- Farmers are stewards of the land and wouldn't use biosolids if they harmed the environment, their soils or the water. Many farmers have received conservation awards and talked about how important environmental sustainability and preservation are to their families and to their farms.
- Current regulations have protected public safety and the environment and no more regulations are necessary,

since they would likely be more restrictive, complicated and cumbersome.

- Regulations for application on slopes should be revised to increase the percent

slope that can be applied. This would help restore eroded land better than commercial
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Alton Willingham, 88, of Fauquier, is still farming and testified about the use of biosolids at one of the recent hearings.



Out of four public hearings, held in Lynchburg, Henrico, Bridgewater and (pictured above) Bealeton, more than 75 people presented testimony supporting biosolids recycling, while just over 20 people called for further restrictions.

State Water Control Board and DEQ Tour Henrico County's Water Reclamation Facility

The Henrico County Water Reclamation Facility hosted an information and education tour for members of the State Water Control Board on April 14. The tour was designed to provide the Board, and staff of the Department of Environmental Quality, with a thorough understanding of the process and technologies used in treating wastewater



Bill Nelson, a local Henrico farmer, speaks to State Water Control Board members and Department of Environmental Quality staff regarding his perspective of biosolid use.

and the resulting generating of biosolids for beneficial recycling. The Board and DEQ staff also observed a demonstration of the agricultural application of biosolids on a farm field owned and leased by the County

of Henrico to a local farmer.

James Grandstaff, Division Director of the Water Reclamation Facility and a Virginia Biosolids Council board member, said that “we are always open to opportunities to educate anyone about our treatment processes and how we clean water, especially people with the responsibilities

of setting policy and of creating and enforcing regulations.”

“Being able to show our state-of-the-art facility and demonstrate its capabilities to the Board and DEQ leadership is not only important to Henrico,” said Grandstaff, “but also to the larger wastewater community in Virginia and the farmers who recycle biosolids.”

Henrico’s facility is located in Varina and treats more than 45 million gallons of wastewater daily, serving more than 300,000 people.

Facts About Henrico’s Treatment Facility

The Henrico County Water Reclamation Facility operates an advanced, tertiary treatment facility that uses enhanced nutrient removal processes to achieve compliance with its permit limitations.

Henrico regulates industries and businesses that discharge into the system through a robust industrial pretreatment program. This program establishes pollutant restrictions to protect the plant’s process, while ensuring no “pass-through” of compounds that could impact health or the environment.

Biosolids are produced, monitored and managed on-site in accordance with the facility’s state permit. Henrico County chooses to land apply biosolids on agricultural lands in Henrico and adjacent counties because it is environmentally responsible, it provides a real benefit to local farmers that choose to use this material and is cost-effective for Henrico County’s ratepayers.

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fertilizer.

- Regulations should be based on science and decades of actual experience on Virginia farms.
- Significant increases in farm productivity from biosolids and improvement in land quality are vital to the sustainability of many Virginia farms, and several farmers commented that without biosolids they would not be able to maintain their operations.
- Biosolids are safe and do not cause

harm, as evidenced by the multiple generations of farmers and farms that have been using biosolids for extended periods of time.

- The proposed 400 ft. buffer extension has significant adverse impact on farmers. A buffer extension has real economic impact since every acre removed from the permit represents lost income and extra cost to farmers. With such restrictions, it is likely that smaller farm tracts will be eliminated from receiving the benefits of biosolids use.



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