

BIOSOLIDS NEWS

News and Information from the Virginia Biosolids Council • August 2013

Conference will focus on new biosolids regs

After years in the making, the comprehensive revision of Virginia's biosolids regulations is now complete. The new rules will be formally implemented by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) in the coming weeks.

The regulations provide Virginia with a comprehensive set of guidelines to protect public health and the environment, while defining predictable procedures and requirements for the management of biosolids.

Just what these new regulations will mean to county officials, farmers, biosolids land application companies, wastewater treatment professionals and the public will be the subject of a special conference in Richmond on September 9.

The Biosolids Regulations Conference is sponsored by the Virginia Biosolids Council, along with a host of other organizations, including the Virginia Association of Counties (VACo), the Virginia Municipal League (VML), the Virginia Agribusiness Council, the Virginia Farm Bureau and the Virginia Association of Municipal Wastewater Agencies (VAMWA).

The Biosolids Regulations Conference will be held at the Richmond Convention Center as part of the annual Water Jam, a conference co-sponsored by the Virginia Water Environment Association and the Virginia Section



of the American Waterworks Association. The biosolids conference will provide attendees with background on the development of the regulations, implementation and roll-out information, and specific information on the differences between the new comprehensive regulations and the previous regulations.

The session will run from 9:30 am to 3:30 pm, including lunch. The fee for the session is \$75.

David Paylor, DEQ Director, will speak during lunch and provide information on DEQ's non-point program. The afternoon speakers will include representatives from local government, the biosolids community, public utilities and the research community.

More information on the conference and a link to register is at: www.virginiabiosolids.com. A direct link for registration is at: www.regonline.com/builder/site/Default.aspx?EventID=1183042

Revision of the regulations was a necessary part of the 2008 transfer of regulatory oversight of biosolids from the Department of Health to the Virginia DEQ. The regulations were developed using a public participatory approach that sought input from all interested parties through a Technical Advisory Committee, or TAC. Participants included citizen representatives, wastewater treatment professionals, agricultural interests, biosolids professionals and other state government representations.

A series of four public meetings was also held by the State Water Control Board to receive comments directly from the public.

Biosolids Regulations Conference Agenda

9:30 a.m.	Welcome and Introduction	1:15-1:30	Introduction of afternoon panel
9:45-10:05	<i>Background & Context</i> Neil Zahradka, DEQ	1:30-1:55	<i>A Plant Operations Perspective</i> Mike McEvoy, Western Virginia Water Authority
10:05-10:45	<i>Regulatory Changes</i> Christina Wood, DEQ	1:55-2:20	<i>A Local Perspective</i> Ann Mallek, Albemarle Board of Supervisors
10:45-11:00	Questions	2:20-2:45	<i>Biosolids at Work in the Field</i> David Simons, Nutri-Blend
11:00-11:15	Break	2:45-3:10	<i>Biosolids Research in Virginia and Elsewhere</i> Dr. Greg Evanylo, Virginia Tech
11:15-11:50	<i>Implementation of Regulations</i> Neil Zahradka, DEQ	3:10-3:25	Questions
11:50-12:00	Questions		Summary comments & close
Noon	(Box lunches to be served)		
12:45-1:15	Luncheon speaker <i>Non-point & the Chesapeake Bay</i> David Paylor, DEQ Director		



The Virginia Biosolids Council supports the recycling of biosolids in Virginia through information and education on the beneficial use and safety of biosolids. The Council is supported by municipal wastewater treatment plants, land application and composting companies and biosolids users, and is available as a resource to those who need information about the recycling of biosolids.

New Kent farm provides land for agricultural research

In the 1950s the Davis brothers purchased about 1,200 acres along the Pamunkey River in New Kent County. Today that farm remains as productive as ever.

Farmed by former extension agents—Paul Davis and his father, Clifton Davis—and other Davis family members, Davis Farms has become welcoming land for researchers from Virginia Tech and elsewhere who want to learn more about a variety of agricultural issues, from biosolids to seeds and weeds to soils.

“I really appreciate the opportunity to work with any of the folks who reach out to us for research, including Virginia Tech,” explained Paul. “We’ve been doing that for more than 30 years. I personally see it as an opportunity to continue my education.”

Davis Farms has also chosen to use biosolids. Its first application was in 1996.

One of the research initiatives currently underway on his farm is one co-sponsored by the Virginia Biosolids Council and the Virginia Small Grains Board. This two-year study is estimating Nitrogen [N] mineralization and plant available N from fall-applied biosolids for small grains. By comparing crop response and environmental leaching risk of biosolids applied at different agronomic N rates in the fall with synthetic fertilizer management practices, the research is expecting to determine how efficiently biosolids are used by plants.

While the results are preliminary, first-year plant growth following fall-applied biosolids was greater than that from fall-applied synthetic fertilizer. Additional sampling is still necessary to fully determine the amount and distribution of N in the soil following harvest.

“Everything has its gives and takes,” said Paul. “Biosolids is great stuff. The nutrients are there that plants need to thrive. However, in today’s environment, we have to be more gentle with the land and take care of our soils in a way we didn’t previously.”



Paul Davis displays one of the pits housing a lysimeter that is used to measure possible leaching of pollutants from the application of biosolids and synthetic fertilizers in corn fields on his farm. This research is separate from the small grains study, which is conducted on winter wheat.

For Paul, that means asking his biosolids contractor to take special care when both staging biosolids and land applying. While previous biosolids applications were disked into the soil, today that is not Paul’s preferred option, since he now practices no-till farming, which is a way to grow crops year-to-year without disturbing the soil. Rather, he used a ripper for the recent biosolids application, or turbo till, which causes minimum soil disturbance by minimizing soil compaction.

As the former extension agent for New Kent County, like his father, he said, “I tell my friends who farm that I believe firmly that it is the farmer’s responsibility to make sure he understands everything that’s going on in his fields, most importantly managing his nutrient plan.”

In Virginia it is a requirement to have a site-specific nutrient management plan prior to biosolids land application. “This takes very active management,” he said.



Kevin Bamber (r), Virginia Tech, explains the progress on the small grains research at the Davis farm to members of the Virginia Biosolids Council and to DEQ officials during a tour last May.

For more information, go to www.virginiabiosolids.com



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