



# Annual Report for Code of Good Practice of the Virginia Biosolids Council

The Board of Directors of the Virginia Biosolids Council established a Code of Good Practice in 2009. The Code establishes a set of guiding principles for the production and beneficial land application of biosolids in Virginia for its members.

In October 2015, the Board of Directors amended the Code and established a process to measure our performance and report on our progress. This Annual Report provides a summary of our performance for calendar year 2016. It is organized in three sections; background, state of the Code of Good Practice, and performance summary.

## BACKGROUND

The decision to implement a Code of Good Practice represented broad recognition by the membership of the VBC to implement common sense best management practices that reflect the social responsibility that comes with the land application and recycling of biosolids. VBC members and their organizations agreed to follow the guiding principles of the Code.

The Code's guiding principles do the following: (1) focus member operations on protecting the environment by using best management practices for the generation and recycling of biosolids; (2) minimize adverse social impacts through the use of best practices; and (3) promote education and awareness with the public and government officials about the generation and recycling of biosolids.

## STATE OF THE CODE OF GOOD PRACTICE

By approving the Code of Good Practice in 2009, the Council's Board created a set of guiding principles for the operation and beneficial land application of biosolids in Virginia by municipal utilities and land application and recycling companies, which comprise the organization's membership.

In 2015, the Code was amended to include the following:

- Added specific reference to Exceptional Quality Class A biosolids
- Added reportable and measurable objectives
- Elaborated on Product Quality
- Added best management practices for generation of biosolids
- Added requirement to share process and technology information
- Added emphasis on continual improvement
- Added requirement for an Annual Report



During the Council's Annual Meeting in November 2016, the goal and vision of the Code of Good Practice was communicated to representatives of the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). The following information regarding the importance of the Code to its membership was conveyed:

- The goal and vision is to have complete compliance by all VBC companies or organizations involved in management of biosolids.
- The Code establishes a commitment to common sense application and the social responsibility that comes with the generation and land application and reuse of biosolids.
- The Code provides guidance to "do the right thing" at all times.

In response, the DEQ representatives confirmed the Code is viewed by the regulators as a tool the members of the Council can use to address matters that are not covered within the state's biosolids regulations, like choosing preferred transportation routes to minimize impacts on the community in situations where a specific health or environmental impact is absent.

In March 2016, Harrison Moody, President of the Virginia Biosolids Council, authored a column on the Code and recent amendments. Titled, "VBC members revise and update Code of Good Practice," the article stated the importance of the Code of Good Practice to its membership and provided a review of its progress. Mr. Moody wrote, "As the VBC's President, the aspirations the organization committed to in our revised Code are important. It remains the foundation for continuing dialogue among members. How we operate, and how we perform at the plant and in the farms and forests of Virginia are important. We have learned, and look to this day, to our Code of Good Practice to provide additional and essential focus."

The column was featured on the Council's website and e-newsletter, which is distributed to state and local officials, and biosolids stakeholders throughout Virginia.

## EXECUTIVE PERFORMANCE SUMMARY

Today, the Virginia Biosolids Council remains focused on its core mission – to provide education and information on the recycling, beneficial use and generation of biosolids, and to provide support to its members on regulatory, legislative and public matters.

Under the direction of the Board of Directors, the Council made the strategic decision that a Code of Good Practice would transform and enhance the culture and accountability of biosolids generation and use in the Commonwealth of Virginia. In addition to regularly providing safety and health information, recycling and use information, the Council committed to evaluating annually the extent to which the Council's members has met the objectives provided in the Code of Good Practice. This section includes an account of the Council's achievements since the Code was initially implemented by the membership in 2009, and since it was amended in 2015.

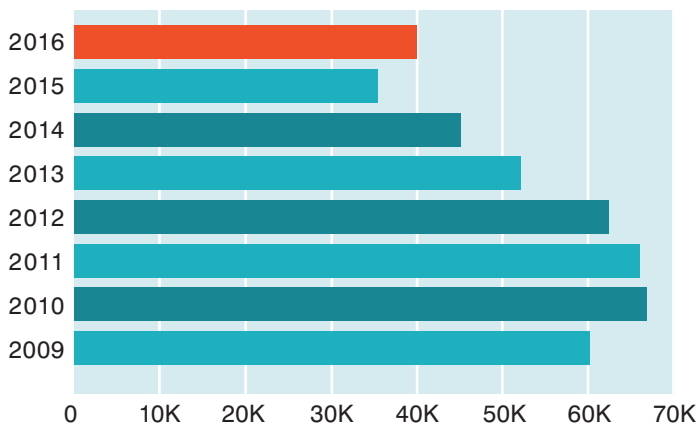
The Virginia Biosolids Council uses as an indicator of compliance publicly available information maintained by the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ).

- In 2016 biosolids was spread on approximately 43,000 acres of farm and forestland in Virginia (<1% of total farm and forestland in Virginia ). In calendar year 2016, the members of the Virginia Biosolids Council responsible for the land application of biosolids on farms and forests received 0 warning letters and were not in violation of any permits. There was 1 warning letter provided by DEQ to a non-member of the Virginia Biosolids Council.
- In 2016, DEQ did not issue any regulatory correspondence regarding product quality (odor), associated with the transportation or staging of biosolids.
- In 2016, DEQ reported 41 complaints from the public specific to biosolids activities. These complaints can be characterized in the following manner: (a) odor; (b) signage; (c) general management. Since the initial approval of the Code of Good Practice in 2009, according to publicly available records, the number of complaints from the public during the land application of biosolids has decreased from 106 complaints (2009) to 41 (2016).

<sup>1</sup> 8.2 million acres of farmland in Virginia (VA Department of Agriculture)

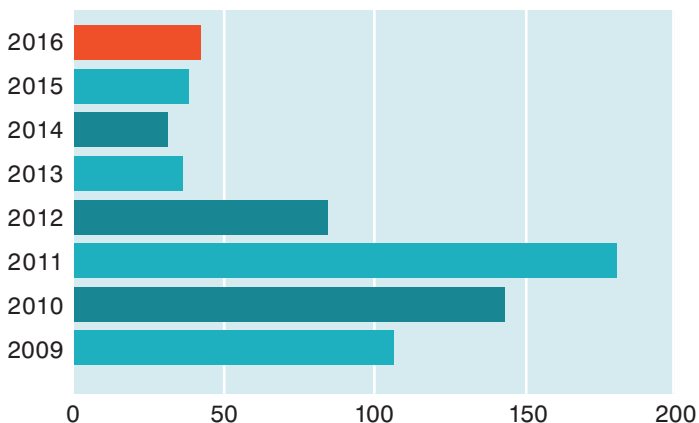
## AG & FORESTRY APPLICATION IN VIRGINIA

(Figure 1)



## VIRGINIA BIOSOLIDS COMPLAINTS

(Figure 2)



- In 2013, DEQ regulations were changed, requiring adjacent landowners of a proposed land application site to be notified. VBC members work with DEQ to address citizen concerns that originate either from a public meeting or during the draft public comment period.
- As an example of member support of the Code, in 2016 Houff's Feed & Fertilizer engaged neighbors who expressed concern. Houff's worked with select adjoining landowners to provide pre-application notice beyond the regulatory requirements, and offered schedule changes that met the concerns of citizens. By always working to achieve compromise, Houff's has been successful at building and maintaining positive relationships in the communities where it operates.

- Each year the Hampton Roads Sanitation District (HRSD) applies its Nutri-Green biosolids to more than 2,000 acres of farmland in two of the largest cities in Virginia – Chesapeake and Virginia Beach. HRSD constantly enforces its pre-treatment control regulations to make sure those regulated sources are compatible with its treatment processes and recycling objectives. During 2016, HRSD encouraged the proper disposal of unused medications through its "My Flush Counts" educational initiative, reducing the input of pharmaceuticals to its treatment process.
- During 2016, the Council's President organized six membership conference calls that included, but was not limited to, discussions on operational best practices and new or innovative technology and processes.
- In 2016, Council members were responsible for three spills. Members responded immediately with the implementation of incident and emergency response efforts, in coordination with state and local officials.

The Virginia Biosolids Council believes it has continued to steadily improve the quality of the biosolids generated by its members, and the performance of its land application and recycling activities, and is adhering to the guidance provided in the Code of Good Practice, adopted by the Board of Directors most recently on October 29, 2015. This is the first annual report card to be issued by the Virginia Biosolids Council since that approval.

Questions concerning this report can be addressed at [info@virginiabiosolids.com](mailto:info@virginiabiosolids.com).

Harrison A. Moody  
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President, Virginia Biosolids Council



# Code of Good Practice

Approved October 29, 2015

The Virginia Biosolids Council's "Code of Good Practice" establishes guidelines for responsibly producing and managing exceptional quality Class A and high quality Class B Biosolids for beneficial use and recycling in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The Virginia Biosolids Council and its members have established measurable performance objectives to support the following goals:

- continual compliance with all applicable regulations for the safe production, transportation, staging and beneficial use of biosolids;
- eliminate instances of adverse social impact associated with the production, transportation, staging and management and beneficial use of biosolids on agricultural and forest lands of Virginia; and
- effective communication to the public, farmers and government officials regarding the value and benefits of biosolids recycling in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Specifically, the Council urges its members to conduct their operations using the following guidance:

## **PRODUCT QUALITY:**

The generation and management of biosolids for beneficial uses will comply with all regulatory requirements. The Council and its members support sustainable best management practices to minimize odors and ensure quality products that minimize adverse social impacts and protect the environment. The Council and its members share technologies and processes demonstrated to improve product quality and support sustainability.

## **COMMUNICATIONS:**

The information provided to local and state officials, farmers and the public will be clear, accurate and timely. The Council encourages members to proactively engage and communicate with communities, the public, interested stakeholders and government officials.

## **CONTINUAL IMPROVEMENT:**

The Council promotes continual improvement in the area of product quality, communications and best management practices. Members routinely review research, case studies and regulations to identify opportunities and to improve performance and quality. The Council provides resources and guidance to members to support sustainable best management practices in the production, staging, transportation and beneficial uses of biosolids.

## **SAFETY:**

The Council and its members are committed to protecting the health and safety of its employees and the public. The Council promotes the development and implementation of spill prevention and incident and emergency response plans.