

Doris Cellarius

Ecology's new "SEPA Determination of Nonsignificance for the Draft Biosolids General Permit" continues to be totally inadequate for protecting Washington's soils, crops and waters.

The PCHB decision called for addressing "information gaps on the degree to which these pollutants are present in biosolids, including their exposure pathways and risk levels, should be discussed in the environmental checklist and DNS, along with forthcoming studies and screening tools."

Ecology has not done this. The checklist should call for testing of biosolids before application for contaminants such as PFAS and also for testing of soils where biosolids have been applied. This is done in other states and is called for in a bill that the Oregon Legislature almost adopted earlier this year before the session concluded.

Ecology's response claiming that in Washington there are no identified biosolids pollution problems because EPA has adopted no regulations or established standards to guide them is inaccurate and deceptive.

"Among the CECs being discussed today are PBDEs, PFAS and microplastics. Research has found PFAS and PBDEs in biosolids at differing levels around the US, including Washington State. The research around microplastics in biosolids is still young. There is still no standardized methodology for identification and quantification of microplastics, but there is ongoing investigation into their presence in biosolids and their effect on human health and the environment. These three contaminants and the associated research conducted on each are representative of three different stages of the analysis process EPA conducts when determining whether regulation in biosolids is necessary. One commonality with these different stages is that research is always ongoing. Should new research identify a contaminant as a risk and the EPA identify appropriate risk based, regulatory limits, Ecology will implement those limits in state rules as well."

Ecology must act now - in this new Permit - by calling for testing of all biosolids and lands where biosolids have been land applied. No real information would be called for until sometime in the future when the Active Septage Management and Active Biosolids Management program requires that:

"new and existing facilities must submit complete permit application packages with plans that include specific information about biosolids treatment, analysis, and uses, including detailed information about proposed land application sites or programs that will sell or give biosolids away without further regulation (if applicable)."

Ecology must require this information now in the new Permit. Its lands, waters and citizens deserve better.

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