

December 11, 2024

Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
Public Comments
PFAS in Biosolids Strategy

RE: Response to PFAS in Biosolids Strategy

To whom it concerns;

I am writing on behalf of the City of Albert Lea to provide comments on the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's (MPCA) proposed PFAS in biosolids strategy. The City of Albert Lea is an owner and operator of a wastewater treatment facility with authorization to land apply our biosolids. Our biosolids are heavily regulated by EPA and MPCA and the land application of those biosolids is safe and environmentally beneficial.

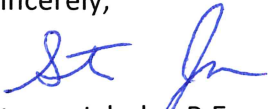
The City of Albert Lea supports efforts to identify, reduce, and eliminate sources of PFAS to POTWs, however we are concerned that the MPCA's proposed strategy is moving faster than what is currently allowed for by law and supported by final risk assessment data. As a local government entity, we also recognize that PFAS presents an important problem that needs to be strategically addressed in a manner that prioritizes public health without imposing undue burdens on municipal wastewater treatment facilities. As a result, we recommend the following key changes to the proposed biosolids strategy:

- The levels of PFOA and PFOS for the four tiers should be adjusted as follows: Tier 1 ($\leq 20 \mu\text{g/kg}$), Tier 2 ($21\text{-}50 \mu\text{g/kg}$), Tier 3 ($51\text{-}125 \mu\text{g/kg}$), and Tier 4 ($\geq 125 \mu\text{g/kg}$). We believe this slight adjustment will provide some additional flexibility, especially for those facilities that find themselves in tiers 1 and 2.
- The ban on biosolids land application in the tier 4 category should be adjusted to a ban on new application sites only with the potential to include additional requirements, such as reduced application rates, and/or other risk mitigation strategies. A land application ban in the tier 4 category is premature both legally and scientifically without risk assessment data demonstrating that such an approach is necessary to protect public health. Outright bans on the land application or other beneficial reuse of biosolids, like what was enacted in Maine, have proven to be disastrous. The only exception to this should be in the unlikely event that the MPCA identifies, on a case-by-case basis, PFOA or PFOS in such high levels that there is an immediate and substantial threat to public health.
- MPCA's proposal to require a reduced application rate of 1.5 dry tons/acre in the tier 3 category is too rigid and it is not tied to any data demonstrating that it is necessary to protect public health. This reduced application rate is used in both the Wisconsin and Michigan strategies, but it is arbitrary and not based on risk assessment data for protecting public health and the environment and could cause significant problems for POTWs and farmers. To address these concerns, the City is suggesting a stated range from 1.5 to 3.5 dry/tons per acre and keeping the existing "or an alternative risk mitigation strategy."

- The strategy should be voluntary, unless PFAS biosolids sampling indicates that there is immediate threat to public health on a case-by-case basis.
- To the extent available under law, MPCA should provide participants in the strategy liability assurances from future MPCA enforcement action related to the land application of biosolids.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. Please feel free to contact me at 507-377-4325 if you would like to discuss further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'St Jahnke', is positioned above the typed name.

Steven Jahnke, P.E.
City Engineer and
Director of Public Works
sjahnke@ci.albertlea.mn.us

cc: Brandon Huston, WWTP Superintendent
Ian Rigg, City Manager
John Ryther, Civil/Environmental Engineer