



Wastewater Treatment Facility
3000 75th St SW
Willmar, MN 56201
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December 10, 2024

RE: Comments on Biosolids PFAS Strategy

To the MN Pollution Control Agency Biosolids PFAS Strategy Review Team,

The City of Willmar appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's ("MPCA") proposed PFAS in biosolids strategy. The City of Willmar 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. We commend the MPCA for developing a strategy that allows for the continued land application of biosolids.

Amara's Law is a critical step in regulating PFAS-containing products but it will take time to see the improvements that its passage may bring related to PFAS levels in wastewater and biosolids. The City of Willmar supports efforts to identify, reduce, and eliminate sources of PFAS to POTWs, but we are concerned that MPCA's proposed strategy is moving faster than what is currently allowed for by law and supported by final risk assessment data. We also recognize that PFAS presents an important problem that needs to be strategically addressed in manner that prioritizes public health without imposing undue burdens on municipal wastewater treatment facilities. To that point, 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 (≤ 20 $\mu\text{g/kg}$), Tier 2 (21-50 $\mu\text{g/kg}$), Tier 3 (51-125 $\mu\text{g/kg}$), and Tier 4 (≥ 125 $\mu\text{g/kg}$). We believe this slight adjustment will provide some additional flexibility and certainty—especially for those facilities that find themselves in tiers 1 and 2.
- The ban on land application of biosolids 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 human 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 human 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 human health and the environment and could cause significant problems for POTWs and farmers. To address these concerns, we suggest using 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.

Respectfully,

Sara Sietsema

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City of Willmar

