



P.O. Box 207
Hope, RI 02831
www.nebiosolids.org
(603) 323-7654
info@nebiosolids.org

Cooperatively promoting the environmentally sound recycling of biosolids and other residuals

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March 9, 2023

The Honorable [Senator Stacy Brenner](#), Chair
The Honorable [Representative Lori Gramlich](#), Chair
Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
State of Maine Legislature
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

RE: Emergency and Long-Term Plans for Managing Biosolids in Maine

Dear Senator Brenner, Representative Gramlich, and all the Members of the ENR Committee:

The North East Biosolids & Residuals Association (NEBRA) is a non-profit organization dedicated to collaboratively promoting the environmentally sound recycling or beneficial uses of water, wastewater, and other residuals and wastes in New England and eastern Canada. Our Maine members include water resource recovery facilities (WRRFs) in Bangor, Bethel, Boothbay Harbor, Camden, Falmouth, Greater Augusta, Kennebec, Kennebunk, Lewiston-Auburn, Lisbon, Ogunquit, Portland, Saco, Sanford, South Portland, Yarmouth and York as well as consulting engineers, technology developers, companies that help manage these materials, including Casella Resource Solutions, and companies that work with farmers, like Northern Tilth out of Belfast.

According to the NEBRA-led National Biosolids Data Project (www.BiosolidsData.org), 115 WRRFs in Maine clean an average of 110 million gallons of wastewater per day, servicing over 800,000 residences and businesses. That results in an estimated 333 wet tons of biosolids (treated sludge) produced every day in the State of Maine, the equivalent of 9 tanker truck loads that have to go somewhere. The management of septage in rural areas is a separate issue. Our members in Maine share your concerns about PFAS and the need to phase out those that threaten public health. They are on the front line of water quality protection; they are part of the solution, not the problem.

Unfortunately, Maine seems to have backed itself into a corner, with no long-term solutions for managing its biosolids. Limiting the end uses has

impacted supply/demand for biosolids outlets and has increased the cost of clean water significantly with solids management costs typically being the second or third largest WRRF utility expense. Our members and the communities they serve now have extremely limited outlets for their biosolids and no immediate solutions.

We are writing today to urge you to speak directly with some of our members, your constituents, about the real problem: what to do with all the wastewater solids produced in the State of Maine. As the State wastewater operators struggle in the short-term to manage the predictable effects of last year's legislation targeting biosolids, the legislature needs to help them with planning and financing for long-term solutions.

In working towards a long-term solution for Maine, NEBRA and New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission (NEIWPC) have been collaborating with the Maine Water Environment Association and other stakeholders on the concept of a "BioHub" for Maine. Some new technologies are emerging for addressing PFAS in the water cycle, but we need a supportive function and locations where these technologies can be tested and proven before full-scale deployment. The BioHub's goal is to bring new technologies forward, allowing for an active research, testing, and educational facility which can serve as a technical resource for water utilities, regulators, water managers, and others in New England and throughout the United States.

NEBRA can assist the legislature in looking at the life cycle "costs" of various biosolids management options in terms of end products, capital/operating costs, and long-term sustainability factors such as energy usage and greenhouse gas generation. NEBRA and its members believe that recycling these organic waste materials as close to the WRRF as possible is the most sustainable long-term management strategy with the least impacts on the climate. There are numerous perfectly good uses for recycled biosolids that do not involve farms growing food such as landscaping, silviculture, and land reclamation projects.

We are aware the Maine Department of Environmental Protection is working with the WRRFs and other stakeholders to come up with a long-term plan for biosolids management in Maine, and we encourage the legislature's support in such a plan. Your support is also needed for interim solutions until a long-term plan for managing Maine's biosolids can be implemented. We would be happy to meet with you and share our expertise and experience on this important issue.

Sincerely,



Janine Burke-Wells
Executive Director

The North East Biosolids and Residuals Association (NEBRA) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit professional association advancing the environmentally sound and publicly supported recycling of biosolids and other organic residuals in New England, New York, and eastern Canada. NEBRA membership includes the environmental professionals and organizations that produce, treat, test, consult on, and manage most of the region's biosolids and other large volume recyclable organic residuals. NEBRA is funded by membership fees, donations, and project grants. Its Board of Directors are from CT, MA, ME, NH, RI, and Nova Scotia. NEBRA's financial statements and other information are open for public inspection during normal business hours. For more information: <http://www.nebiosolids.org>.