

STATE OF CALIFORNIA  
REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD  
SAN FRANCISCO BAY REGION

STAFF SUMMARY REPORT (Bill Johnson)  
MEETING DATE: October 14, 2020

ITEM: 7

SUBJECT: **Biosolids Disposal and Beneficial Reuse within the San Francisco Bay Region – Information Item**

DISCUSSION: This item will provide an overview of biosolids disposal and beneficial reuse within our region and how this will likely change because of an evolving regulatory landscape and concerns related to land application, such as contaminants of emerging concern and sea level rise. We will present a synopsis of our current oversight and how we plan to coordinate with the Bay Area Biosolids Coalition to improve future management options. The Bay Area Biosolids Coalition program manager, Sarah Deslauriers, will present the coalition’s vision for the future, which includes improving land application opportunities and supporting biosolids-to-energy projects.

Biosolids are municipal sludge that has been treated, tested, and shown to meet U.S. EPA requirements for beneficial reuse set forth in 40 C.F.R. Part 503. These requirements include, in part, restrictions on where biosolids may be applied, limits on toxic metals, and specific reduction requirements for pathogens. While some Bay Area Publicly Owned Treatment Works (POTWs) beneficially reuse biosolids by land application, many route biosolids to landfills for use as alternative daily cover. Senate Bill 1383, approved by the Governor in 2016, will significantly reduce this practice because it requires a 75 percent statewide reduction from 2014 levels in the amount of organic waste disposed of in landfills by 2025. As such, we expect many Bay Area POTWs to start or increase using biosolids as a soil amendment. While some Bay Area POTWs truck biosolids to the Central Valley for beneficial reuse as a soil amendment, trucking biosolids over great distances is expensive and increases greenhouse gas emissions. Because biosolids are sometimes applied near the Bay margin, there is also a growing concern over the sustainability of this practice.

With no budgeted staff resources for biosolids permitting and oversight, we primarily rely on compliance with U.S. EPA regulations for the 26 existing land application sites in our region. Going forward, we plan to work collaboratively with the Bay Area Biosolids Coalition to evaluate risks from contaminants of emerging concern (such as per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances) and the need for fate and transport studies for biosolids applied in areas susceptible to sea level rise. To manage biosolids more sustainably, the Bay Area Biosolids Coalition has undertaken a regional approach to develop biosolids-to-energy projects. There are now six biosolids-to-energy projects at Bay Area POTWs, each with the goal of capturing the energy potential from biosolids and minimizing greenhouse gas emissions. We expect, with the help of the Bay Area Biosolids Coalition, that these projects will expand and increase over time.

RECOMMEN-  
DATION: This is an information item. No Board action is necessary.