

The News and Advance
Lynchburg, VA
Letter to the Editor

Dear Mr. Bob Wimer:

Thank you for your community awareness article of August 29, 2004, wherein you addressed some health concerns relative to sewage waste sludges being dumped in Virginia. While your article represents concerns and inequities in the accountability of sludge dumping, it misses the point of the citizenry's need for health protection re the current proposed VDH rule changes.

Please be aware that the original proposal for a notice of intent to apply sewage waste sludges (AKA biosolids) was for the protection of those within the community that may have a sensitivity to the harmful constituents in sludges. It has long been argued in the State Biosolids Use Regulations Advisory Committee (BURAC) that a minimum of thirty (30) day notice should be required in order for local residents, with health issues as asthma, bronchitis, immune suppressed conditions and those on prescribed medications, to have time to visit their physician for a medical opinion and medication relative to their health being affected by sludge dumping. This thirty (30) notice has been resisted by the overwhelming majority of waste industry representatives dominating this committee and supported by the VDH.

Your readers will be better served if you analyze these current rule making changes: 1. These changes are from the waste industry and promoted by the VDH, at taxpayers' expense, to hoodwink the State Board of Health and Virginians. This is nothing more than a PR ploy. 2. Why fifteen (15) days and forty-eight (48) hours? This does not allow adequate time for a community resident to make an appointment with their attending physician, take tests, get results, determine a medical opinion, contact the Health Department for an abatement due to health conditions that could be exacerbated by the harmful contents of sludges. Therefore, the Applicator proceeds to dump sludge, residents get sick and the Health Department says the cause of sickness is from other sources as stated by VDH, "after 20 years of dumping, not even one person has been affected." 3. Please ask your readers why residents must pay for doctor visits out of their limited income? Why must the State pick up the indigents' medical bills for the illnesses caused by sludge dumping? What are the bedridden residents to do but to endure the sludge odors, aerosols and pathogens that permeate their homes? What about the health of organ transplantees that are on immune suppressant drugs? Why has the Health Department ignored the physicians' medical warnings and the independent peer reviewed scientific warnings and studies? The answer to the proceeding questions is the Almighty Dollar, at the expense of Virginians' liberty, health, safety, welfare and yes even loss of life, contributed to sewage waste sludges being applied without content knowledge or proper monitoring (accountability).

The waste industry has long fought the requirement for pollution insurance. Your readers must ask why.? The current waste industry amendments offered, and promoted by VDH, calls for general liability of \$1 million for Applicators doing less than \$5 Million, \$2 Million G.L. for those doing more than \$5 Million in sludge dumping. There is no requirement, that we know, for pollution insurance. However, how much is required to cover the millions being spent in Wake County, NC for contaminating drinking wells with sewage waste sludges (AKA biosolids) ?; How much for the loss of an Augusta, GA dairy farmer when his herd was killed off by sewage waste sludges (AKA biosolids) ? He was awarded, by a jury, \$550,000 for the cows and is now suing for \$12+ Million for his defiled land; How much is required for cattle deaths in Virginia that are contributed to sludges (there is a historical record) ?; How much is enough for Loudoun County having to buy residents' lands that were polluted by runoff from landfills ?; How much for Virginians that have had their ponds and fish killed, on their private property, by sludge runoffs? Many testimonials, science evaluation and court settlement cases bear this out.

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Again, these waste industry rule changes are designed as a PR ploy that the public, local elected officials, State Board of Health nor legislators should buy into. Analyze for yourself, what substance is there in these "rule changes" other than to legitimize the continued forcible dumping of sludges in Virginia without any community consideration of health nor compensation.

Signs, without warnings, are a joke. The waste industry use signs as a promotional bill board, i.e., " we support the Chesapeake Bay", while they are the ones who dumped sludges into the Bay and have caused the \$Billions in clean up costs and increasing dead zones. Your readers will be hard pressed to read the signs from any acceptable distance or in the tall grasses and bushes. You are correct, the signs will not alert anyone to the dangers, only that they have 48 hours to leave their home or suffer the consequences, as many Virginians have from sludge dumping. This is, of course, if one knows what "biosolids" are; most citizens do not and the waste industry nor VDH will volunteer any harmful content information/caution.

You correctly reported that the VDH has not concerned itself with the health conditions of rural residents. There is documented testimonial, reputable physician reports, scientist study and court actions that confirm the need for addressing the public's health issues re sludge dumping.

However, while ignoring any negative reports, VDH will not conduct control nor cohort evaluation of the sewage waste sludge (AKA biosolids) content.

While VDH promotes the sludge being land applied openly, it also promotes the waste industry's proposal to increase topical land storage sites (Field Storage) consisting of tens of thousands of tons of sludges left uncovered in the fields throughout rural Virginia. This exposes the sludge contents to runoff, no monitoring, aerosols carried by wind velocity and no testing for bacteria, spores, mold nor hook/tape worm regrowth before application. Is there any question, with the recent rain fall, that there would be sludge content runoff? High concentrations of Nitrogen, Phosphorous, pathogens, heavy metals and chemicals from the heap of sludges piled high while uncovered, unmonitored and with unconcern will surely pollute our air, land and water ways (as documented). Note: With free land for storage, there is no storage/application expense to the Applicator/Generator, therefore hauling profits are increased...The Almighty Dollar!

Should you wish to print this for your readers, you will be doing them a service. If not, then you have been made aware of the facts and another uncovered industry/VDH PR ploy. As you will know, in time, there is more to this plot for making Virginia the largest sludge cesspool in the world. This is not an opinion but a substantiated fact, if anyone wishes to investigate.

Respectfully submitted by:

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