

**ORANGE COUNTY  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

**ACTION AGENDA ITEM ABSTRACT**

**Meeting Date:** August 18, 2009

**Action Agenda**

**Item No.** 4-g

**SUBJECT:** Land Application of Biosolids Regional Forum 2009

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**DEPARTMENT:** Health

**PUBLIC HEARING:** (Y/N)

No

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**ATTACHMENT(S):**

Planning Summary: Biosolids Forum

**INFORMATION CONTACT:**

Rosemary Summers, 245-2411

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**PURPOSE:** To authorize redirection of funds from conducting a biosolids research project to an educational forum on land application of biosolids.

**BACKGROUND:** In 2006, because of community concerns about the effects of biosolids on health, the Health Department reserved \$10,000 from its operating budget for a research study to get more information about air and water quality in an area surrounding a biosolid application site. The Department developed a service agreement with Dr. Mark Sobsey, an Environmental Sciences and Engineering professor at the UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health for this study. The agreement was to conduct a pilot study in Orange County to determine air and surface water characteristics before and after the land application of Class B biosolids. There were a number of barriers encountered along the way to designing and conducting this study. These barriers included:

- Small amount of funding limited the study to graduate student availability on an academic schedule.
- Denial of a grant submittal that would have been used to leverage the available funding from Orange County.
- Alternate faculty member that was interested in supervising the student changed academic institutions.
- Securing permission from two suitable sites' landowners for voluntary participation in the study.
- Identifying an alternative permitted application site with suitable geographical considerations (nearby stream). Two sites had landowner permission but were not suitable geographically.
- Drought conditions during 2007 and 2008 were not conducive to commencing the study.

In the summer of 2009, Health Department staff met with several UNC faculty members in Environmental Sciences and Engineering to determine whether this study would be able to

move forward. The faculty members believe the amount of the funding is not adequate to carry out the study and to ensure the quality of the study.

Community interest and concern regarding the topic of biosolid application to land remains high in certain areas of the County. Community activist groups have sponsored various listening sessions and distributed materials that advocate for specific policy changes at the state and local level based on the materials and information they have acquired.

The Health Department is requesting permission to redirect the research study funds (\$10,000) to support costs for holding a multi-county conference/forum on land application of biosolids. The forum would educate participants about various aspects of the current practice of land-applied biosolids from wastewater treatment plants. Both state and nationally recognized experts will present sessions on technology, research, health and environmental risk management of current practices. A field tour of a local biosolids processing facility and an application site will be offered on a second day. The attached sheet outlines preliminary thoughts from the planning committee. The Planning Committee includes:

- Tom Konsler/Greg Grimes, Orange County Health Department, Environmental Health Services
- Dr. Fletcher Barber, Orange County Cooperative Extension Director
- Dr. Jeff White, North Carolina State University Soil Science
- Dr. David Lindbo, North Carolina State University Soil Science
- Dr. Chip Simmons, North Carolina State University Bio-Ag Engineering
- Gail Hughes/Kenny Ray, Orange County Soil and Water
- Jon Risgaard, Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Division of Water Quality
- Carl Carroll, Alamance County Health Department, Environmental Health
- Andy Seignor/ Terri Ritter, Chatham County Health Department, Environmental Health

Tom Konsler and Greg Grimes, Orange County Health Department – Environmental Health Services, are providing staff support for the Planning Committee. County Environment & Resource Conservation Director Dave Stencil and Planning Director Craig Benedict have also been briefed on the upcoming forum so that their boards can be appropriately advised and encouraged to attend.

Re-direction of these funds would be used to defray the costs of the forum to keep registration fees low and encourage widespread attendance. Funds will support travel or honorarium costs for speakers, lunch, breaks, transportation to field sites, marketing, materials preparation, sound system. A specific budget will be developed as the planning committee finalizes the agenda.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:** The funds were encumbered in 2006. Redirecting their use would not affect the 2009-2010 Fiscal Year budget. It is likely that the entire amount will not be needed for this forum. Any unexpended portion of the \$10,000 would return to the general fund (approximately \$4,000).

**RECOMMENDATION(S):** The Interim Manager recommends that the Board approve the re-direction of funds for the biosolids research study to support a community-wide biosolids forum in an amount up to \$6,000 with the remaining portion returning to the general fund.

**Conference Planning Summary through July 30  
Land Application of Biosolids Regional Forum 2009**

**Objective:** To provide accurate information on land application of biosolids from wastewater treatment plants that includes current best practices based on research and current scientific knowledge.

**Co-sponsors**

- OC Health Department
- OC Cooperative Extension
- NCSU
- UNC SPH
- Chatham & Alamance County Health Departments
- DENR
- OC Soil & Water

**Target Audience:**

- Interested community members and residents
- Industry – biosolids applicators and producers
- Regulatory – local and state agency
- Policy – planners, commissioners, board members
- Owners of land being used for biosolids applications

Target audience size is 75 – 100. Meeting room has capacity for 185.

Limitations on field tour numbers will need to be discussed (Field Tour limited to 50?)

**Conference location:** Orange County Southern Human Services Center  
2501 Homestead Rd. Chapel Hill

<http://www.co.orange.nc.us/gis/locations/index.asp?ServiceID=97>  
(reserved)

**Date(s):**

- October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2009 from 8:00 – 4:30
- October 8<sup>th</sup>, 2009 from 8:00 – 12:30 – Optional Field Tour

**Field Tour**

- OWASA WW Treatment Plant – Could run two groups of 20 ppl each concurrently
- OWASA Biosolids Application site - subject to schedule, equipment location, weather
  - Hillsborough & Burlington also as back-ups
  - In case of inclement weather, OWASA has a prepared presentation demonstrating their WWTP and Biosolids treatment/application program

**Funding Source**

- Possible funds from area health departments
- Registration fee – \$10 per person to cover lunch and breaks

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**Draft Agenda**  
**Land Application of Biosolids Forum 2009**  
**October 7 -8, 2009**

- **Welcome and introduction of the local issues** **8 – 8:15**
- **Treatment Plant Process and Management** **8:15 - 9:45**
  - Description of WWTP Technology focusing on biosolids treatment
  - Understanding the process
  - Options available for biosolids management
  - Alternatives to land application
  - Testing requirements and performance standards
  - Class A vs. Class B
- **Regulation of Biosolids in NC** **9:45 – 10:45**
  - History
  - Current practice
  - Future
  - Statistics for NC
  - Science behind the regulations
- **Break** **10:45 – 11:00**
- **Report from US EPA** **11:00 – 12:00**
  - How EPA recommendations are established and revised
  - Future of biosolids
  - Emerging contaminants – metals
- **Lunch – On-site** **12:00 – 12:45**
- **Research Summary** **12:45 – 1:45**
  - A summary of research that has been published or is planned for biosolids handling to address the following aspects: agronomic, environmental , soil, water, air, health
- **Health and Risk Management** **1:45 – 2:45**
  - agronomic, environmental , soil, water, air, health
- **Break** **2:45 – 3:00**
- **Panel Discussion** **3:00 – 4:15**
- **Conclusion** **4:15 – 4:30**

**October 8<sup>th</sup>, 2009 (Optional Second Day)**

**Meet at Southern Human Services Center**

**8:00**

**Session**

**8:15 – 12:45**

Bus 1 to Cane Creek / Headwaters Biosolids storage and application site

Bus 2 to OWASA WWTP (Buses flip locations for 2nd half of the morning and end at SHSC).