



SENATE BILL 0732 - Sewage Sludge Utilization Permits - Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances - Concentration Limits Pesticides - PFAS Chemicals - Prohibitions

POSITION: FAVORABLE

February 14, 2025

Dear Chair Feldman and Honorable Members of this Committee,

Assateague Coastal Trust writes in **SUPPORT** of **Senate Bill 0732**, which would establish concentration limits for per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in sewage sludge utilization permits issued or renewed by the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE). This bill is a crucial step in protecting the health of Maryland's residents, our natural environment, and the integrity of our public health systems.

Assateague Coastal Trust serves more than 800 square miles of Maryland's Lower Eastern Shore, including Worcester and portions of Wicomico and Somerset Counties, in its mission to safeguard clean water rights for residents and visitors to the region. We speak on behalf of our membership, residents and visitors alike, who share a common interest in the health of the Coastal Bays located behind Assateague Island, and the southern tributaries of the Chesapeake Bay.

PFAS, often referred to as “forever chemicals,” are a class of human-made substances that have been linked to a range of serious health issues, including cancer, liver damage, developmental harm, and immune system disruptions. These chemicals are persistent in the environment, bioaccumulate in wildlife and humans, and do not break down over time. As such, the contamination of soil, water, and food sources with PFAS poses an escalating threat to public health.

Sewage sludge, a byproduct of wastewater treatment, is often used in agriculture as a fertilizer or soil amendment. **However, without stringent limits on PFAS concentrations, these chemicals can enter the food chain through crops, livestock, and water sources.** The inclusion of PFAS in sewage sludge raises serious concerns about the safety of food grown in contaminated soil and the water supplies that may be affected by runoff or infiltration.

Senate Bill 0732 will address this threat by requiring the MDE to limit the concentration of PFAS in sewage sludge utilized in Maryland. The bill stipulates that these limits will be set at 1 microgram per kilogram ($\mu\text{g}/\text{kg}$), in line with health-based standards or any stricter limits that may be developed by the Department. This will ensure that sewage sludge used for agricultural

purposes does not introduce unsafe levels of PFAS into the environment. Additionally, the bill establishes requirements for demonstrating compliance with these concentration limits, promoting transparency and accountability within the process.

The bill also empowers MDE to establish further limits through regulation, allowing the department to respond to emerging scientific research and public health concerns related to PFAS. This flexibility ensures that Maryland remains responsive and proactive in safeguarding its communities from potential PFAS contamination.

We urge this committee to adopt a **FAVORABLE** stance on **Senate Bill 0732**, which will ensure that Maryland's agricultural practices and wastewater management systems do not contribute to the spread of toxic PFAS. By setting clear and enforceable limits on PFAS concentrations in sewage sludge, this bill will help protect our environment, support sustainable agriculture, and promote the health and safety of Maryland's citizens for generations to come.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Taylor Swanson
Assateague Coastal Trust
Executive Director & Assateague Coastkeeper
PO Box 731, Berlin, MD 21811
Taylor@actforbays.org
www.ACTforBays.org