

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2002 Session

FISCAL NOTE

House Bill 953

(Prince George's County Delegation)

Environmental Matters

Prince George's County - Environment - Application of Sewage Sludge PG 417-02

This bill increases the current minimum buffers that apply to the land application of sewage sludge in Prince George's County. The specified buffer distances may not be reduced or waived. The bill also requires the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) and the county Department of Environmental Resources to establish specified odor control requirements for the application of sewage sludge on marginal land in the county.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill would not materially affect State operations or finances. MDE already has odor control measures in place through regulation.

Local Effect: By increasing the minimum buffers, the bill would limit the land available for the utilization of sewage sludge in Prince George's County. Prince George's County advises that it could meet the bill's requirements with existing resources. The Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC), which is the primary generator of sewage sludge in Prince George's County, advises that because it currently disposes of its sludge in Virginia, the bill would have no fiscal impact on WSSC. To the extent that any municipalities in Prince George's County apply sewage sludge on land in the county, costs for disposal could increase as a result of the bill.

Small Business Effect: Minimal.

Analysis

Current Law: Under current regulations, a person may not engage in the land application of sewage sludge without obtaining a permit from MDE. Current regulations stipulate specified buffer areas. MDE may require increased buffer distances or may reduce buffer distances and may set buffer zones between sludge boundaries and other land uses. Permits issued by MDE for the application of sewage sludge on land include odor control measures. MDE has enforcement powers to correct odors when they do occur at sludge sites.

Background: Buffer zones are designed to protect against any impact by runoff of sewage sludge into local waterways or leaching of excess nutrients into groundwater. Currently, there are 24 active permits for sewage sludge application in Prince George's County covering 2,843 acres. According to MDE, sewage sludge application on marginal land represents 1,891 of the permitted acres. The remaining land is farmland permitted for sewage sludge use as a fertilizer.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Prince George's County, Maryland Department of the Environment, Department of Legislative Services

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