

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2006 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 1171

(Delegate Cardin, *et al.*)

Environmental Matters

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Task Force on Sewage Sludge as an Alternative Energy Source

This bill establishes a task force to evaluate and make recommendations regarding methods of facilitating the use of sewage sludge as an alternative energy source. The Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) must provide staff for the task force. A preliminary report of findings and recommendations is due to the Governor and specified legislative committees by July 1, 2007. A final report is due by December 1, 2007.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2006 and terminates December 31, 2007.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Any expense reimbursements for task force members and staffing costs for MDE are assumed to be minimal and absorbable within existing budgeted resources.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: MDE's Waste Management Administration regulates the transportation and utilization of sewage sludge. MDE's Air and Radiation Management Administration regulates discharges to the atmosphere from kilns and other furnaces that would likely be candidates for using sewage sludge as a supplemental fuel.

Chapters 487 and 488 of 2004 established a Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard (RPS) in Maryland. The law requires each electricity supplier to include in its portfolio of electricity for retail sales a specified percentage of energy derived from renewable sources. Sewage sludge is not explicitly included as an eligible energy source under the RPS.

Background: According to MDE, each year more than 700,000 wet tons of sewage sludge are generated in Maryland. An estimated 50% of the sewage sludge produced in the State is applied to agricultural land; 18% is composted or palletized and made into a commercial soil supplement; 21% is used for land reclamation such as restoring surface mines; and 11% is disposed of in landfills or incinerated.

According to MDE, sewage sludge is already used as a supplemental fuel in cement kilns elsewhere, and one Maryland company in Carroll County has already conducted a test burn at its facility. MDE advises that, during the test burn, the use of dried biosolids in the cement process showed significant increases in nitrogen oxide emissions; however, there were decreases in other air pollutants. MDE has granted the company permission to conduct a second trial to determine if dried biosolids can be used without impacting air emissions.

MDE advises that the use of sewage sludge as a supplemental fuel in some furnaces can be beneficial, and that the industry is investigating its possible use. MDE advises that, while sewage sludge may be useful as a fuel supplement, it probably does not provide sufficient thermal energy to totally supplant more traditional fuels in most applications.

According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, in 2002, net generation from biomass sources (including sludge waste) totaled 2,672,017,000 kilowatt-hours nationwide. Of that amount, only 29,000 kilowatt-hours were generated in Maryland.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Maryland Department of the Environment, Maryland Energy Administration, U.S. Energy Information Administration, Department of Legislative Services

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