

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2009 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 1058

(Delegate Walkup, *et al.*)

Environmental Matters

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Environment - Sewage Sludge Utilization Permits - Local Notice

This bill specifies that when the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) receives an application for a permit to utilize sewage sludge, it must mail a copy of the permit to the appropriate county's executive and legislative body, the executive of any municipal corporation where the sewage sludge utilization site is to be located, and to the executive and legislative body of any county within one mile of the site.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None. The bill does not materially affect State finances or operations.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: When MDE receives an application for a permit to utilize sewage sludge, it must mail a copy of the permit to the county and any municipal corporation where the sewage sludge utilization site is to be located and to any county within one mile of the site.

Background: Sewage sludge is one of the final products of the treatment of sewage at wastewater treatment plants. Sewage treatment breaks down organic matter and kills disease-causing organisms leading to the creation of the sludge. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has long promoted the beneficial use of sewage sludge. Despite this, some academic researchers note that there remain risks of applying treated sewage sludge to agricultural land as fertilizer.

Sewage sludge is being considered for use as a renewable fuel. The California Energy Commission has certified one company's proprietary sewage sludge fuel creation process for inclusion in the state renewable portfolio standard, and the company's waste-to-energy plant is currently under construction.

According to MDE, more than 700,000 wet tons of sewage sludge are generated in Maryland each year. There are approximately 654 active sewage sludge utilization permits effective in the State. Approximately 150 permits and renewals are issued each year, and permits are effective for up to five years. MDE reports that in Maryland approximately 50% of sewage sludge is applied to agricultural land (an increase from 31% in 2006); 21% is used for land reclamation such as restoring surface mines; 18% is composted or pelletized and made into a commercial soil supplement; and 11% is disposed of in landfills or incinerated (a decrease from 13% in 2006). Since 2006 the share of sewage sludge being hauled out of state has been phased out from 41% to zero.

State Fiscal Effect: The bill does not require that any additional notice be provided, but instead only specifies the recipient to whom the notice must be sent.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Cecil County, Carroll County, St. Mary's County, Town of Berlin, Town of Bladensburg, City of College Park, City of Frostburg, City of Rockville, Baltimore County, Maryland Department of the Environment, Harford County, Montgomery County, Department of Legislative Services

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