



NORTHWEST BIOSOLIDS

Unearthing Sustainable Solutions

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February 10, 2025

Representative Ken Helm, Co-Chair
Representative Mark Owens, Co-Chair
House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Subject: Support for House Bill 2947—the Biosolids PFAS Study Funding Bill

Dear Co-Chairs Helm and Owens, and Members of the Committee:

The interests of biosolids and residual management in the Pacific Northwest is of significant concern to many parties. Northwest Biosolids (NWB) is a regional association which provide research, education and guidance on safe practices and solutions for biosolids and residuals. NWB represents over 90 utilities, including many of those in the state of Oregon. One of our primary missions is to provide reliable information and advocacy on behalf of our members and the public, and to be a leader in sustainability and utilization of renewable resources.

Our association and members recognize the importance of addressing threats from PFAS and related “forever chemicals” to public health and the environment. However, clean water agencies are passive receivers of these constituents. These agencies do not manufacture nor use these chemical nor do they have effective means of treating them. As such, it is imperative that any future decisions related to this matter be based on science and reliable data.

HB 2947 would fund Oregon State University (OSU) to study the effects of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in land applied biosolids on soil, water, and agricultural crops in select sites in Oregon. Municipalities and farmers have shared a long-standing partnership using treated organic materials collected and processed at municipal wastewater facilities as nutrient-rich fertilizers and soil conditioners. Biosolids contribute proven benefits to soil and crops. They also sequester carbon in soil, which is becoming increasingly important as a means to combat the impacts of climate change.

This biosolids PFAS study is needed because there is growing scientific evidence that exposure to PFAS substances may lead to a range of human health problems. This presents a significant challenge for wastewater treatment facilities, that receive PFAS pollution from industries, businesses, and households. Wastewater treatment plants are not designed to treat complex chemicals like PFAS, which pass through to water and biosolids. Data collected in Oregon to date reflects that Oregon does not have the types of PFAS generating industries or the highly concerning levels of PFAS that have been found in other parts of the country. It is important, however, that cities, farmers, and regulators develop a better science-based understanding of the presence of PFAS in municipal biosolids and their impacts in the environment and on crops. HB 2947 will provide the funding needed to develop the science to inform future biosolids management practices in Oregon. Northwest Biosolids is supportive of this study and urges you to support HB 2947.

Sincerely,

James Dunbar, P.E.
President
Northwest Biosolids
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