



Distilled biosolids and residuals news for New England and eastern Canada

March 23, 2020

EVENTS...

Due to the Coronavirus pandemic, many events have been cancelled or postponed. Check the [NEBRA website](#) for the latest updates.

The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MADEP) will be hosting a conference call with state clean water operators on Wednesday, **March 25th**, from 9 to 10 am to get a handle on any concerns and resource needs.

NEBRA will be participating in a "Twitter Chat" about **resource recovery** on March 25th starting at 3 pm EST.

Here are the events that have not yet been affected by the COVID-19 outbreak:

[PFAS in Connecticut](#): The Latest Developments, scheduled for **April 28th** in Hartford.

The National Association of Clean Water Agencies (NACWA)'s [National Pretreatment Workshop](#) is scheduled for May 12 - 15 in Nashville, TN.

[Disposal Options for Residuals in the Age of PFAS](#) is being offered by NEIWPCC on May 14th at the NHDES offices in Concord, NH.

The Northeast Resource Recovery Association's 39th annual Recycling Conference & Expo, May 18-19 in Manchester, NH.

The call for abstracts for the [Canadian Biosolids and Residuals Conference](#) closes on **March 31st**.

[More events...](#)

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

Englobe is seeking a qualified sales representative for its impacted soils treatment disposal services in the northeast US.

See the [NEBRA website](#) for this and other career opportunities!

CHECK IT OUT:

Late night TV takes on PFAS! Check out this recent clip from The Daily Show with Trevor Noah in a segment called "If You Don't Know, Now You Know". Chocolate cake takes a hit again.

WEF's [Words On Water #125](#): George Sprouse on *Managing Biosolids in Uncertain Times*.

NEBRA [presentation](#) for the Illinois Sustainable Technology Center on "Contaminants of Emerging Concern (e.g., PFAS) in Biosolids and Wastewater," slides and video of webinar available.

Sustainable Phosphorus [webinar series](#) now available on YouTube.

Listen to a podcast about the infamous [Poop Train](#) (oldie but goodie).

Biolo, the "Temple of Poop", is a composting toilet with a view and a rooftop garden (see [photos](#)).

Dyper, a manufacturer of bamboo fiber diapers, will deliver and [take used products back for composting](#).

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NEWS from NEBRA

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COVID-19: Latest Public Enemy #1

We at NEBRA are safe and staying safe from COVID-19 so that we can help our members get through this very serious public health crisis. As a profession, we have dealt with many serious emergencies in the past, including pandemics. It's a time to rely on our professional training, resources, and colleagues. Please know that NEBRA is just a call or an email away, if you need us for anything.

We know our operator members know what to do:

- Use personal protective equipment and standard sanitation/disinfection practices.
- Wash hands regularly, stay 6 feet away from others, stay home if sick, and follow other recommendations being publicized nationwide.

It is essential that you work safely and remain healthy.

It is also important to stay informed. NEBRA's website homepage now gives you one-click access to the Water Environment Association (WEF)'s Current Priority: [Coronavirus page](#). It's the resource we currently recommend.

For NEBRA members, it may be a good time to review the research abstracts from this past July and the summary -- **Perspectives on Pandemics** -- by Sally Brown, Ph.D. (University of Washington). [Read more...](#)

Fallout From COVID-19 to Impact Biosolids & Residuals Markets?

The Agricultural community is concerned about the coronavirus' impacts on the supply of fertilizer and other "ag inputs" according to a recent [article in AgWeb](#), an online farm journal. In addition to the chemicals needed to produce fertilizer, China is also a large supplier of macronutrients like phosphates. According to AgWeb:

"First of all, this is very dynamic and is fairly unprecedented," says Samuel Taylor, vice president of farm input analysis at Robobank. "What we do know is that the production of many of the macronutrients and also the active ingredients for ag inputs is heavily concentrated to China. So what happens in China will have profound effects in the short term for sure."

There could also be impacts as a result of border restrictions with Canada and Mexico.

Could basic supply and demand garner biosolids another look as a serious soil amendment in the Northeast? In the biosolids market, we will have to answer the question about whether our products contain COVID-19 or other viruses. NEBRA will work on condensing the information out there and translating it into Plain English for our members to use in communicating with farmers and other biosolids end users. We especially need to work with farmers in this temporary market situation to ensure biosolids are considered as a potential solution for them wherever possible. In that way, many more could be introduced to the benefits of biosolids and help us spread the word. NEBRAMail will continue to follow this issue closely.

4 Years In: Merrimack, New Hampshire Is Still Struggling with PFAS and St. Gobain

In March 2016, Senator Kelly Ayotte of New Hampshire wrote a letter to then U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Gina McCarthy urging more EPA attention to contamination issues related to "perfluorochemicals" (PFCs, now called "PFAS"). The letter mentioned the 2015 closure of a major public drinking water supply well at the former Pease Air Force Base... and the more recent discovery of PFOA contamination from a St. Gobain coating facility in Merrimack...

Two years later, test results had found PFOA in Merrimack compost in the 8 to 15 parts per billion (ppb) range and PFOS in the 8 to 11 ppb range....

Another two Marches later, and now, in 2020, we know that PFOA, PFOS, and/or other PFAS have been found in every biosolids product tested in this region and across North America, as well as in many other places and matrices....

[More...](#)

In Brief / en bref...

Misinformation Plays a Major "Roll" in Toilet Paper Shortage of 1973

The Great Toilet Paper Scare, a new short (10 minute) documentary by filmmaker Brian Gersten, tells the story of the national run on toilet paper in 1973, sparked by a joke Johnny Carson made on his Late Night Show. It was well covered by the *New York Times* at the time (see "[The Shortage of Bathroom Tissue: Classic Study in Rumor](#)" by Andrew H. Malcom), including a great rundown on how the scare was started and why it continued for some time. A recent article in *The Atlantic* dug up this old history again in promoting Gersten's documentary. [The Atlantic article](#) quotes Stuart Henderson Britt, a late marketing professor with Northwestern University with his explanation of how it happened:

"One person says there could be a problem. The next person says there probably is a problem. The next person says there is a problem."

To watch the entire documentary, click [here](#).

Good News for Biosolids From Research Studies in Sweden and Denmark

Researchers from the Centre for Antibiotic Resistance Research, part of the University of Gothenburg in Sweden, recently concluded a scientific research study looking at the effects of over 30 years of regular use and spreading of sludge on soils compared to plots of land where only inorganic fertilizers were used. In collaboration with Umea University and the University of Copenhagen, the [researchers found no accumulation of antibiotics](#) in any of the soils where biosolids were used. They also didn't find any significant antibiotic resistant bacteria. Meanwhile, in research from nearby Denmark, the Danish National Food Institute teamed up with Copenhagen University and published a study in December looking at risks related to agricultural use of sewage sludge and pig and cattle slurry. The conclusion in this report was "Overall, sewage sludge is considered to not represent a higher risk to soil organisms than pig or cattle slurry." To read the full report, go [here](#). Only the first few pages are in Danish.

Oxford Goes Back To The Future, Managing PFAS-Contaminated Sludge In-House

The Town of Oxford, Maine selected NEBRA member Woodard & Curran to evaluate and design options for its Water Resource Recovery Facility (WRRF) sludge dewatering process. Until recently, thickened sludge from onsite operations was pumped to a truck and transported to the Lewiston-Auburn Water Pollution Control Authority (LAWPCA) for disposal. LAWPCA stopped accepting Oxford's sludge after recent laboratory testing confirmed the presence of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in excess of State-mandated screening levels (that NEBRA argues are inappropriate). Woodard & Curran analyzed several alternatives, arriving at the most feasible solution: construction of a new sand drying bed at a Town-owned property. The sand drying bed will provide a permanent means of sludge dewatering owned and operated by the Town. The major benefits of this solution are two-fold: it permanently eliminates trucking and disposal costs to the LAWPCA facility, and the dried sludge can be properly managed by various options, including three nearby landfills and, perhaps in the future, via land application. The Town is currently seeking grants for the project.

