



Making a difference...together

Executive Office

625 Fisgard Street, PO Box 1000

Victoria, BC, Canada V8W 2S6

T: 250.360.3125

F: 250.360.3130

www.crd.bc.ca

March 19, 2024

File: 0400-40
Correspondence/Meetings/General
File: 5200-30
Biosolids

The Honourable George Heyman
Minister of Environment & Climate Change Strategy
PO Box 9047, Stn Prov Gov Victoria, BC V8W 9E2
Via email: ENV.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Dear Minister Heyman:

RE: LONG-TERM BIOSOLIDS MANAGEMENT PLAN AND REQUEST FOR MEETING

I am writing on behalf of the Capital Regional District (CRD) Board regarding significant challenges with biosolids management in the capital region. The majority of the regional biosolids are generated at the CRD's Residuals Treatment Facility located north of Hartland Landfill. This facility receives wastewater sludge from the McLoughlin Wastewater Treatment Plant (RE#108831) and generates approximately 10 tonnes of dried Class A biosolids per day.

Between 2021 and 2024, the CRD was unable to consistently follow the CRD's approved short-term (2021-2025) Biosolids Beneficial Use Strategy (Definitive Plan) to incinerate biosolids at the Lafarge cement plant. This was due to both planned shutdowns at the cement plant, and unplanned operational issues. In general, the CRD has required more than 300 days of contingency capacity per year, whereas the CRD's approved contingency plan (engineered cover systems at Hartland Landfill) contemplated only 35 days of contingency annually. Due to the over-reliance on the contingency plan, capacity to store and mix biosolids was exceeded in 2022, and CRD staff were forced to landfill biosolids contrary to direction in your letter to the CRD dated October 29, 2019 (attached).

In an effort to minimize landfilling of biosolids, the CRD Board amended the regional ban on land application of CRD biosolids on February 8, 2023, to allow out of region, non-agricultural land application of biosolids as a short-term contingency alternative. This allowed the CRD to contract with a gravel extraction quarry in Cassidy, BC where a mix of biosolids and sand are currently being stored under cover, pending regulatory approval for mixing into biosolids growing medium for quarry reclamation. The quarry operator will ensure the biosolids are applied in accordance with the Organic Matter Recycling Regulation (OMRR) but are awaiting approval under the *Mines Act* before proceeding. This option was curtailed in early January due to limited storage capacity at the site. The quarry operator has advised that an additional storage area will be available for CRD biosolids by the end of March 2024.

The CRD is currently developing its long-term biosolids management plan. As directed by the Ministry, this includes analysis and public consultation on all available beneficial reuse options, including various thermal and land application scenarios. This plan is due to the Ministry by June 18, 2024, and is to be implemented by January 1, 2025.

The CRD understands that the Ministry has been working on the modernization of OMRR, to ensure it remains protective of human health and the environment. Part of this work involved the establishment of a Technical Working Group (TWG), to collaboratively identify new scientific information on emerging contaminants of concern in biosolids. The CRD Board anticipates that the findings of the TWG report will help us make an informed decision on biosolids management. The report was initially anticipated in late 2023, but release is now expected in May 2024. Due to this delay, the Board passed the following motions at our March 12, 2024, meeting:

MOTION ARISING: Given delays to provincial reporting on Organic Matter Recycling Regulation, and the Board's previous direction to initiate an academic analysis, that the Board direct staff to move forward with a third-party academic review of the scientific literature on the uses and impacts of biosolids.

MOTION ARISING: That the Board direct staff and the Chair to write to request a meeting with the Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy to discuss an extension on finalizing the CRD's long-term biosolids management plan.

The Board continues to receive correspondence and delegations from the public expressing their concern regarding the potential for human health and environmental impacts resulting from the presence of emerging contaminants of concern in biosolids. It is my hope that the TWG report or a third-party academic review would help address these concerns. It is the CRD's intent that a CRD funded third-party academic review will complement, not duplicate, work already undertaken by the Ministry.

To meet the June 18, 2024, deadline for submission of our biosolids long-term management plan, the CRD Board would be required to submit a long-term biosolids management plan before being able to consider the TWG report findings. As such, I request a meeting with you to discuss the CRD's long-term biosolids management plan, including an extension of the submission deadline.

Sincerely,



Colin Plant
Chair, Capital Regional District Board

Attachment

cc: CRD Board
Ted Robbins, Chief Administrative Officer, CRD



Reference: 349364

X-Reference: 10400-60/LWMP CRD Core

OCT 29 2019

Colin Plant, Chair
and Directors
Capital Regional District Board
PO Box 1000 625 Fisgard Street
Victoria BC V8W 2S9

Dear Chair Plant and Directors:

Thank you for the June 21, 2019, submission of the Capital Regional District (CRD) Biosolids Beneficial Use Strategy, in accordance with the conditions of approval of the Core Area Liquid Waste Management Plan (CALWMP) Amendment No.11. The Strategy forms part of the CALWMP and, therefore, requires approval from the Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy.

Pursuant to Section 24(5) of the *Environmental Management Act*, I hereby approve the Strategy under the following conditions:

Short Term

- a) The CRD must not landfill biosolids in the event of scheduled cement plant shutdowns.
- b) By April 30, 2020, the CRD must submit for approval an updated Contingency Plan that has more fully assessed options for use of the Class A biosolids in contingency circumstances. This assessment must include scenarios under which land application could be utilized prior to landfilling; information about timing and duration of scheduled cement plant shutdowns; and an estimate of unscheduled shutdown duration and frequency based on operational history is required.
- c) By June 1, 2021, the CRD must submit an updated Net Energy Balance Assessment and Greenhouse Gas Emission Estimate.

Long Term

- a) The CRD must include land application in the options analysis and conduct consultation for the long-term biosolids strategy that is intended to be implemented by January 1, 2025.
- b) Options considered should include a range of beneficial uses including, but not limited to forestry (for example, fertilizer/soil conditioner), reclamation (for example, mines), landfill closure and agriculture.
- c) This consultation process must include citizens, local government and Indigenous communities within the CRD.

...2

The ministry's waste management policy framework is guided by the 5R Pollution Prevention Hierarchy (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Recovery and Residuals Management). In accordance with the hierarchy, landfilling should only be considered when all other options are implemented or exhausted. As such, I expect the CRD to continue to look for alternative means of beneficially using biosolids in the short term to accommodate predictable disruptions in the cement plant's ability to use the product. This strategy may include increasing the short-term storage on site or applying biosolids to the land but cannot include disposal or long-term storage in the landfill. It's important that a robust consultation process is undertaken with respect to developing this strategy for the CRD.

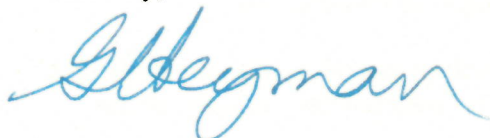
The CRD's policy banning the land application of biosolids unnecessarily limits the options available for beneficial use. While respecting the CRD Board's authority to create such a policy, it is the ministry's position that the land application of biosolids, in accordance with the Organic Matter Recycling Regulation (OMRR), will benefit the environment and potentially reduce costs to the taxpayer. The OMRR includes requirements for biosolids treatment, quality testing and the creation of site-specific land application plans, by qualified professionals, to ensure that the land application of biosolids is both safe and beneficial. OMRR also contains specific requirements for providing notification prior to any land application activity and provisions that specify where biosolids can be placed to ensure protection of drinking water and the environment. Land application is widely practiced by other regional districts in British Columbia, in other jurisdictions in Canada and worldwide.

The benefits of land application of biosolids include addition of organic matter and nutrients to the soil to support plant growth (a more sustainable option compared to chemical fertilizers), increased carbon sequestration, decreased greenhouse gas emissions, and increased soil water holding capacity. Examples of beneficial use include, but are not limited to, landfill closure activities, mine reclamation and augmenting soils in our forests to promote regrowth.

The CRD has committed to implement a long-term strategy for biosolids management by January 1, 2025, as part of the CALWMP. The long-term biosolids strategy development process will provide an opportunity for CRD to conduct a full-options analysis of biosolids beneficial uses, including land application. A full-options analysis of costs and benefits will allow CRD to conduct informed public consultation and to meaningfully engage with Indigenous communities.

Please continue to work with staff in the Environmental Protection Division of the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy on the development of the long-term beneficial use strategy.

Sincerely,



George Heyman
Minister

cc: Cassandra Counce, Director, Authorizations South, Environmental Protection Division,
Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy