Permitting a Biosolids and/or Short Paper Fiber Site in New Hampshire

What is a Biosolids and/or Short Paper Fiber Site?

The New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services defines sludge as the solid or semisolid material produced by a water and wastewater treatment process. The definition also includes sludge mixed with another sludge or another material. This definition excludes domestic septage (see fact sheet WD-WEB-14, Permitting a Septage Site in New Hampshire). Further, sludge that is disposed at a solid waste facility permitted by the DES shall be considered solid waste and regulated under RSA 149-M. Biosolids is the term used for any sludge derived from a sewage wastewater treatment facility that meets the standards for beneficial reuse, that is, has received a Sludge Quality Certification or SQC (see fact sheet WD-WEB-12, Sludge Quality Certification). Industrial sludge (mainly short paper fiber or SPF) is also used in land application as a soil conditioner. SPF is sludge derived from a pulp or paper mill wastewater treatment facility and must also obtain an SQC prior to being land applied. Sludge that is not certified cannot be land applied and must be disposed by landfill or other method. A site is defined as contiguous land area(s) owned by the same person, on which biosolids and/or SPF is land applied, even if the land area is divided by a highway, rail bed, waterbody or boundary of a political subdivision.

According to Env-Wq 804.02 of the New Hampshire Sludge Management Rules, a site permit is required for all land application sites, all mixing sites where the resultant material is to be used on site, and all stockpile sites where the stockpiled material will remain on site for eight months or less and where the stockpile location is not on a site already permitted under the rules. The person proposing to undertake land application activities regulated by Env-Wq 800 must apply for a site permit through the DES Wastewater Engineering Bureau.

A typical site involves the land application of biosolids and/or SPF for agricultural purposes. However, these materials are also used to improve and/or promote establishment of vegetation on soils that have been severely disturbed or which are in a poor vegetative state, e.g., gravel pit reclamation. The permit process includes evaluation of site suitability as well as surrounding land use. Once an application meets criteria set forth in the rules, the proposed site permit is subject to a public hearing in the town in which the activity is to take place. If a sludge site permit is approved, there are very specific federal and state regulations, in addition to any applicable local regulations, that must be followed, along with specified conditions in the permit, to protect human health and the environment.
Why Permit a Biosolids and/or Short Paper Fiber Site?

As population and businesses increase in New Hampshire, so does the volume of wastewater that must be processed both at municipal wastewater treatment facilities and industrial wastewater treatment facilities. There are several options available to dispose of the sludge produced by these facilities, including landfilling, incineration, land application, and disposal out-of-state. DES has determined that sludges that are treated in accordance with the applicable provisions of the Sludge Management Rules and USEPA 40 CFR Part 503 regulations can be beneficially reused as a soil conditioner and fertilizer. Issuing site permits helps to ensure that the land application of residuals is done in a manner that protects human health and the environment.

What is the Procedure for Permitting a Biosolids and/or Short Paper Fiber Site?

A site permit application must be completed and submitted to DES. The application must include all attachments, signatures and public notifications. The required information includes, but is not limited to:

- Applicant and applicant’s business information.
- Who will be managing the site and when.
- Information about the location of the proposed site.
- Type of land application activities being proposed at the site, such as agricultural land application, forest application, reclamation and stockpiling.
- A Site Plan prepared in accordance with Env-Wq 806.06.
- A Management Plan prepared in accordance with Env-Wq 806.07.
- Soil testing in accordance with Env-Wq 806.10.
- A statement signed by the applicant certifying:
  - The applicant has complied with the notification requirements of Env-Wq 803.01.
  - All operators of the facility have been instructed regarding the requirements of Env-Wq 800 or shall be instructed prior to working at the facility.
  - A copy of the application has been submitted to the governing body of the municipality in which the activity is proposed to occur.
  - The information submitted is accurate.

Each application shall be submitted in duplicate and accompanied by the applicable fee specified in Env-Wq 806.04. Once an application is considered complete, the DES will notify the applicant and a public hearing will be arranged. Public notice of the hearing shall appear in a local paper no sooner than 30 days prior to the scheduled hearing. Following the hearing, DES shall then issue a site permit if it meets criteria specified in Env-Wq 806.05.

How Do You Obtain a Biosolids and/or Short Paper Fiber Site Permit Application?

Sludge site applications can be obtained by visiting the DES website at www.des.nh.gov/wwe/septslud.htm or the Sludge Management Rules, Env-Wq 800, can be downloaded at www.des.nh.gov/rules/desadmin_list.htm or by calling the Residuals Management Section at (603) 271-7888.