

**REPORT TO ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMMITTEE
MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, APRIL 17, 2024**

SUBJECT **Biosolids Literature Review – Update**

ISSUE SUMMARY

To provide the Environmental Services Committee with an update on the proposal for an independent academic review of the risks and benefits of biosolids land application.

BACKGROUND

At the August 9, 2023 Capital Regional District (CRD) Board meeting, staff were directed to *report back with a proposal that CRD Environment Service fund University of Victoria or other suitable independent academic institution to prepare a review: a) of available literature, to determine whether there are validated examples and/or peer reviewed papers assessing the risks and benefits of the application of biosolids on environmental and human health, and b) based on this and on The Precautionary Principle, whether CRD may have a legal liability for such application.*

At the October 18, 2023 Environmental Services Committee meeting, staff presented a proposal for an academic institution to conduct a literature review. At that time, the provincial government's Technical Working Group (TWG) was expected to issue a report on its review of the *Organic Matter Recycling Regulation* in late 2023. Given the upcoming report, the committee passed the following motion: *That the committee postpone discussion on this item until the January 2024 committee meeting.* Staff have been receiving semi-regular status updates from the TWG Secretariat and other provincial staff.

The TWG consists of academics, consulting practitioners, and representatives from federal, various provincial and local governments. The TWG is effectively undertaking the same literature review exercise that the CRD Board requested. The final TWG meeting was held at the end of September 2023 and a summary report of its findings and recommendations was initially expected by the end of November 2023 at the earliest. At the February 14, 2024 CRD Board meeting, staff reported that the TWG report was delayed "to the end of Q1 2024."

At the March 13, 2024 Board meeting, staff reported that the report had been delayed again until Q2 2024. Staff were then directed to reinstate the process of authorizing the literature review by the following motion: *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.*

Staff have reconfirmed the interest of only one of the three independent academic institutions initially willing to undertake the literature review, which is the Toronto Metropolitan University (TMU) Department of Chemistry and Biology, led by Dr. Lynda McCarthy. The intended lead author from University of Victoria Department of Engineering and Computer Science (civil engineering) has since gone on leave and the author from The University of Washington College of the Environment has not yet responded. The TMU team has a confirmed lead author who will rely on support from various co-authors.

Any literature review is expected to take at least two to three months to organize and complete. The review would be guided by the Terms of Reference (Appendix A).

ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1

The Environmental Services Committee recommends to the CRD Board:
That staff be directed to proceed with an academic review of the risks and benefits of biosolids land application with the team from Toronto Metropolitan University, with a budget not to exceed \$40,000.

Alternative 2

The Environmental Services Committee recommends to the CRD Board:
That an academic review of the risks and benefits of biosolids land application be reconsidered after the provincial technical working group has completed its review of Organic Matter Recycling Regulation and released its report.

IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

Costs for the proposed biosolids literature review will be approximately \$40,000 and can be covered by existing Core Area wastewater and biosolids budgets.

CONCLUSION

The CRD Board directed staff to reinitiate consideration of an additional literature review of biosolids land application, given the recent delays in reports supporting the current BC Organic Matter Recycling Regulation review. Staff have reconfirmed that a knowledgeable, independent academic institution is available to complete this review. The review is expected to take at least three months to administer and complete.

RECOMMENDATION

The Environmental Services Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board:
That staff be directed to proceed with an academic review of the risks and benefits of biosolids land application with the team from Toronto Metropolitan University, with a budget not to exceed \$40,000.

Submitted by:	Glenn Harris, Ph.D., R.P. Bio., Senior Manager, Environmental Protection
Concurrence:	Larisa Hutcheson, P. Eng., Acting General Manager, Parks & Environmental Services
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ATTACHMENT

Appendix A: Biosolids Literature Review – Terms of Reference