CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

Environmental Protection and Restoration
Environmental Education

House Bill 909

Sewage Sludge Utilization Permits – Per– and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances – Concentration Limits

Date:	February 26, 2025	Position:	**FAVORABLE**
To:	Environment & Transportation Committee	From:	Gussie Maguire, MD Staff Scientist

Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) **SUPPORTS** House Bill 909, which sets limits on the concentration of perfluorooctane sulfonic acid (PFOS) and perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) in sewage sludge (also known as biosolids) to be applied to agricultural fields, not to exceed 1 part per billion (ppb). HB 909 draws from the latest research and guidance on PFAS chemicals to protect Maryland's farmers and their customers from forever chemicals, and limits the probability of harmful runoff reaching Maryland's rivers, streams, and the Chesapeake Bay.

PFOS and PFOA are members of the per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances family, also known as "forever chemicals". These persistent chemicals accumulate in soil, groundwater, and living organisms; they are known to have short- and long-term harmful effects on humans and animals at very low concentrations. Ordinary wastewater treatment technologies cannot remove PFAS chemicals, so they become concentrated in biosolids. Once applied to agricultural fields, the chemicals can be taken up by crops, bioaccumulated in grazing animals, percolated into groundwater, or carried by runoff into nearby streams and rivers. Many of Maryland's waterways already have some level of fish consumption advisory due to PFOS and PFOA contamination- limiting their concentration in biosolids reduces another pathway by which these harmful chemicals enter the environment and pose a risk to human health.

HB 909 also sets a time frame for testing, which responds to the potential for comingling of different sources of biosolids and their contaminants. PFAS chemicals, including PFOS and PFOA, have "precursors", or related chemicals that can recombine and transform into PFOS and PFOA, which would increase the concentration of those chemicals in the comingled biosolids batches. Requiring that biosolids be tested 14 days prior to application helps ensure that the measured concentration is close to what will actually be present during application.

Farms throughout the United States have already paid the price for under-regulation of PFAS chemicals in biosolids, experiencing poisoned dairy herds and soil so thoroughly contaminated that vegetables grown on site cannot be safely consumed for generations to come. HB 909 sets a scientifically-informed limit on these dangerous chemicals and will help protect the Chesapeake Bay from polluted runoff.

CBF urges the Committee's FAVORABLE report on HB 909.

For more information, please contact Matt Stegman, Maryland Staff Attorney, at mstegman@cbf.org.

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