

PFAS & SEWAGE SLUDGE

Sen. Sara Love & Del. Dana Stein
SB0732 / HB0909

THE PROBLEM

Biosolids are the solid waste, or sludge, produced during the treatment of municipal, human, and industrial wastewater. **In Maryland, biosolids – including some from out-of-state facilities – are used as fertilizer on farms.** However, these biosolids often contain pathogens and toxic substances, including PFAS chemicals, also known as “forever chemicals.” While existing regulations prohibit immediate grazing, raw crop consumption, and public access to treated fields, these measures fall short when biosolids contain PFOS and PFOA, two highly toxic PFAS compounds that persist in the environment and pose significant risks to human and ecological health.

During treatment, these chemicals concentrate in biosolids, which are then spread on agricultural fields. Alarming, Maryland’s biosolid permits allow waste from multiple facilities to be applied to single fields, heightening the risk of contamination.

Biosolids containing PFAS run off farm fields and filter into groundwater and contaminate drinking water sources. PFAS also bioaccumulates in fish and wildlife, and is stored in milk, fruits and vegetables.

States across the country are working to pass policies that protect human and environmental health from toxic PFAS in biosolids. Following their lead, Maryland began testing biosolids and found significant PFAS levels. While the state has recommended guidance on PFOS and PFAS levels in biosolids, the recommendations are not strong enough and they lack necessary enforcement authority.

The **Environmental Protection Agency’s draft Sewage Sludge Risk Assessment**, released in January, highlights the severe risks posed by PFOS and PFOA levels as low as 1–5 parts per billion, linking exposure to contaminated water, wildlife, and crops to serious health issues, including immune dysfunction, thyroid disease, and cancer.

Maryland can’t wait for the EPA and must take stronger action to safeguard its drinking water sources, environment and the health of our farmers and communities.

WHAT THE BILL DOES

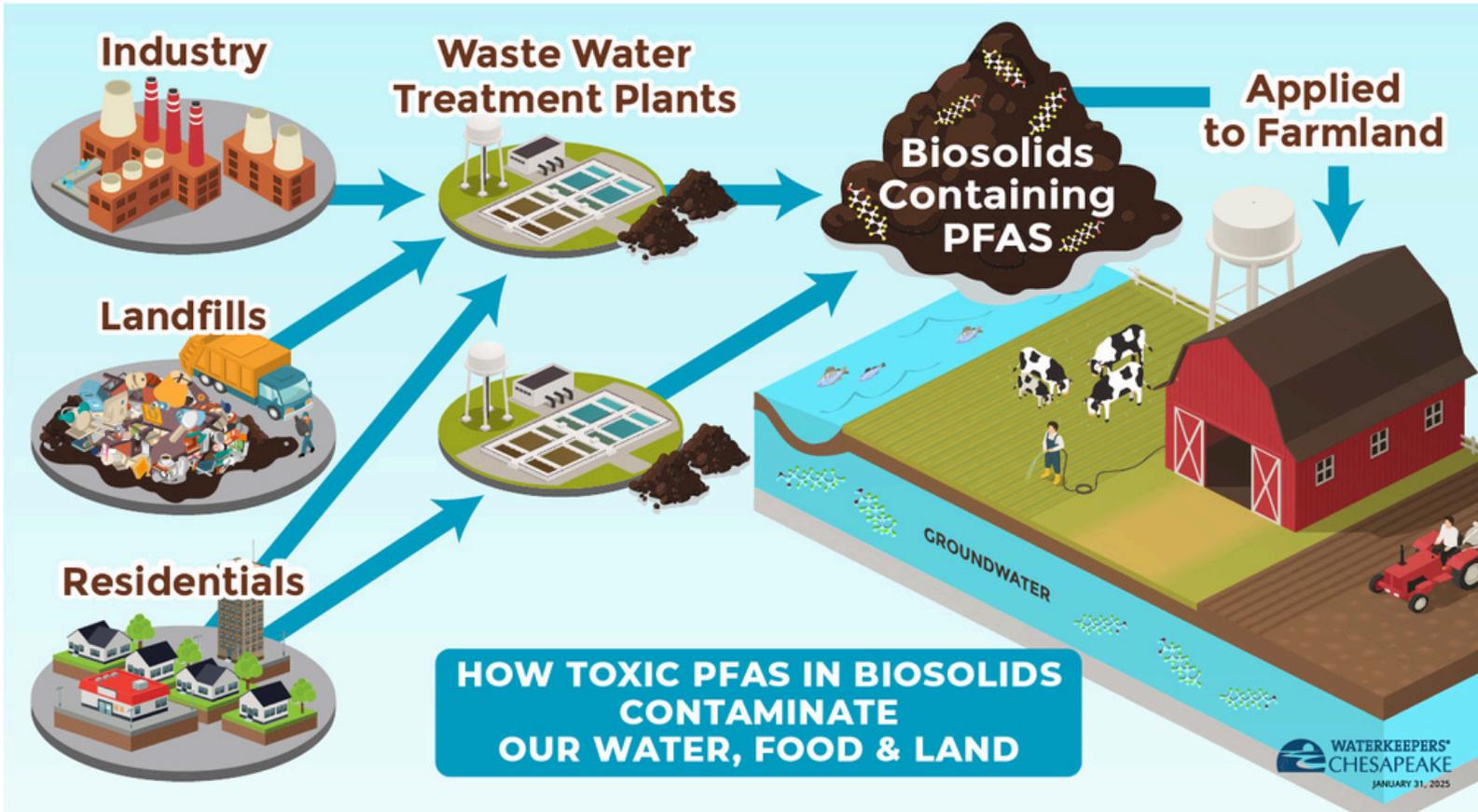
- Requires biosolids to be tested 14 days prior to being applied to farm land
- Establishes a 1 ppb limit for PFOS & PFOA in biosolids

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Since 2003, EPA has known that biosolids can contain alarming levels of PFAS. In a 2018 report, the EPA's Inspector General accused the agency of failing to properly regulate biosolids.

"The EPA Promotes Toxic Fertilizer. 3M Told It of Risks Years Ago", New York Times, Hiroko Tabuchi, December 27, 2024

SUPPORTING ORGANIZATIONS



More info at <https://waterkeeperschesapeake.org/pfas-sewage-sludge-bill-2025/>