

Element 6 and 9: Public Participation and Communication – Background

Revision: 11	Revision Date: 04/02/10	Approved By:
--------------	-------------------------	--------------

BACKGROUND

The Public Participation and Communication element will ensure that the Metro District has in place a proactive public participation and communication approach to communicate about District actions and to involve interested parties in its biosolids management activities and the EMS program. This element describes the Metro District's process for internal and external communications concerning the biosolids management activities, including means for receiving, reporting, and tracking complaints and inquiries.

The District has established a systematic process for considering the views of interested parties in establishing, updating, and improving biosolids management goals and objectives and for communicating with the public. Feedback received through the District's various means of communication is reviewed and considered for appropriateness as it relates to our goals and objectives for the coming year. The District has long had a Stakeholder Group associated with its METROGRO Farm. This group was established in 1997 when the District began to plan for a third-party independent biosolids monitoring program on its Farm. The District also conducted a Stakeholder Research survey in 2000, 2003, and again in 2006 asking neighbors of the METROGRO Farm and elected officials serving in the counties where the Farm is located what their concerns were regarding biosolids activities and farm operations. Follow-up surveys are planned for three-year intervals, and their results are considered when establishing goals, objectives, and action plans for the following years. In addition, private farmer and private farmer neighbor surveys were implemented in 2006 are also planned for a 3-year frequency. (NOTE: Although surveys were anticipated at 3-year intervals, the 2009 surveys were pushed back until 2010 because of very tight budget restrictions in the 2009 budget.)

In addition to the Stakeholder Group associated with the METROGRO Farm, the District also has established a formal Citizen Participation Group, or CPG. This group includes representatives of environmental groups such as the Sierra Club, civic groups such as the League of Women Voters, academics, citizens involved in organics recycling, county biosolids regulators, and ordinary citizens. They meet at least four times a year as needed to discuss issues and hear from the District about ongoing biosolids management and other activities.

One District activity that is particularly productive in providing feedback is the Information and Complaint database. This Intranet-based database is accessible by several District employees who can both enter information in the database and review it as well. The database is used to enter requests for various types of information that come from a variety of sources as well as complaints. It helps the District track queries to make sure questions have been answered and complaints resolved. It also helps us to look for trends in terms of types of complaints or queries so we can deploy additional resources as necessary.

Metro Wastewater Reclamation District
Environmental Management System for Biosolids

Element 6 and 9: Public Participation and Communication – Background

Revision: 11	Revision Date: 04/02/10	Approved By:
--------------	-------------------------	--------------

The District has long employed a variety of proactive communication and outreach tools to reach various publics who might be affected by District biosolids activities. The publics include employees, customers, prospective customers, legislators, regulators (federal, state, and local), neighbors around farm properties where we land apply biosolids, educators, environmentalists, members of the news media, and others. The tools are adapted for both internal and external publics. They include such outreach methods as the District's web site, tours, brochures, information booths at the Colorado Farm Show and the Colorado Garden and Home Show, a bimonthly employee newsletter, a three-times-a-year external newsletter concerning the District's METROGRO products for farm audiences, an annual report, a 14-minute video that discusses the biosolids program in depth, and news releases that are sent to area media when there is news to announce. (The above list is not all-inclusive.) Communication tools are chosen so as to align the selected tool with the audience. For example, the audience for a weekly eastern Colorado newspaper called the I-70 Scout includes as a subset most of those with whom we wish to communicate about activities on the METROGRO Farm and about our biosolids management program. We therefore place the METROGRO Update newsletter in this paper as a paid advertising insert to insure wide distribution in that targeted geographic area. With the cessation of composting in 2009, the District may reevaluate certain communication outreach activities to determine the usefulness of certain activities in the face of having no compost to sell.

A Board of Directors that represents the member municipalities of the District oversees all activities. The Board of Directors approves investments in capital improvements, the annual operating budget, and associated decisions on user charges and bond financing. They also provide broad policy guidance. Public concerns and issues are addressed in the EMS Program Performance and Management Review report that is presented to the Board at Committee meetings in April/May.

Any feedback received through the District's various means of communication is reviewed and considered for appropriateness as it relates to our goals and objectives for the coming year.

The District's Public Participation and Communication Plan summarizes the process for getting input and considering the views of interested parties. These public participation activities are managed interactively with the District's proactive external communications and public education programs for informing interested parties about the District's biosolids management activities and the EMS.

Element 6 and 9: Public Participation and Communication – Background

Revision: 11	Revision Date: 04/02/10	Approved By:
--------------	-------------------------	--------------

PURPOSE

The purpose of this procedure is to define the District's overall approach and methods for reaching out to various publics and getting input from interested parties on its METROGRO® biosolids management program and EMS.

SCOPE

This plan is based on historic public education, outreach, and involvement in its biosolids management program, the current level of interest in biosolids management, and the methods of engaging interested parties in the District's biosolids activities and EMS.

REFERENCES

- NBP National Manual of Good Practice
- Element #2: Biosolids Management Policy
- Element #5: Goals and Objectives for Continual Improvement
- Element #15 and #17: EMS Program Performance and Management Review Report
- Element #16: Internal EMS Audit
- Public Participation Plan
- Public Outreach (OPER 40.30)
- Stakeholder Research Survey

DEFINITIONS

Interested Parties – individuals, groups, or other public/private organizations interested in, involved with, or otherwise affected by the organization's biosolids management activities. This includes customers, farmers, regulators, and other local/state/federal government officials, community residents, the media, environmental and public interest groups, university professors and the general public.

Public Education – systematic public communications program for educating interested parties and other stakeholders of the District's biosolids management activities.

Public Participation – specific approach(es) and action(s) taken by the District to involve interested parties and the general public in its biosolids management program, including establishing improvement goals and objectives.

RESPONSIBLE PERSONS

- EMS Coordinator
- Public Information Officer

Element 6 and 9: Public Participation and Communication – Background

Revision: 11	Revision Date: 04/02/10	Approved By:
--------------	-------------------------	--------------

- Assistant Public Information Officer
- Director of Environmental Services
- Director of Resource Recovery and Reuse

RELATED TRAINING

For related training, please refer to Element #8 of this manual.

PROCEDURAL STEPS

Management of Inquiries and Complaints

1. The District's receptionist/switchboard operator or other point of initial public contact will direct incoming calls, faxes, e-mail, or correspondence as follows to the Public Information Officer or the Assistant Public Information Officer:
 - Media Inquiries
 - Public Education
 - Health/Environmental Concerns
 - Complaints
 - Tours - RWHTF
2. The District's receptionist/switchboard operator or other point of contact will direct incoming calls, faxes, e-mail, or correspondence as follows to the RR&R O&M Office:
 - METROGRO® Products
3. The District's receptionist/switchboard operator or other point of contact will direct incoming calls, faxes, e-mail, or correspondence as follows to the RR&R Specialist:
 - METROGRO Farm
 - EMS/Biosolids Performance
 - Private Land Application
 - Tours – Ag
 - Odors – Application Site
4. The District's receptionist/switchboard operator or other point of contact will direct incoming calls, faxes, e-mail, or correspondence as follows to the Environmental Services Department:
 - Odors – RWHTF
5. The District's receptionist/switchboard operator or other point of contact will direct incoming calls, faxes, e-mail, or correspondence as follows to Central Records:
 - CORA
6. If the District employee taking the call cannot locate the appropriate contact listed above for an immediate response, the District employee will then access the

Metro Wastewater Reclamation District
Environmental Management System for Biosolids

Element 6 and 9: Public Participation and Communication – Background

Revision: 11	Revision Date: 04/02/10	Approved By:
--------------	-------------------------	--------------

Inquiry and Complaint Record form located on the Intranet. *(Note: a copy of this form is included in this element and can be used in hard copy form if the form is forwarded according to previous steps).*

7. The District employee taking the call will attempt to collect as much information as possible from the caller and complete the form.
8. The District employee taking the call will inform the caller that the appropriate person is not available at this time to take the call but they will forward the information and the appropriate District personnel will contact them within 48 hours.
9. Once the inquiry/complaint is submitted, a copy of the form will be automatically e-mailed to the appropriate personnel.
10. The appropriate personnel will contact the caller within 48 hours in an effort to respond to the inquiry or complaint.
11. Once the inquiry or complaint has been handled, the EMS Coordinator will follow-up and will close out the form noting the final resolution as appropriate.
12. Each month, the EMS Coordinator will print a report of all open inquiries and complaints and review the report and contact responsible person on any inquiry or complaint still open for resolution.
13. The EMS Coordinator will close or follow-up further on records based on review of the monthly report.
14. The EMS Coordinator and the Public Information Officer will review the effectiveness of the tracking form twice each year, once for the first half of the year and once for the second half of the year.
15. Information gathered from these reports may be considered in setting goals and objectives for the coming year as appropriate.

Management of Internal Communication

1. As District management becomes aware of revised biosolids management activities, that Department Head will forward the new information to his/her staff utilizing current venues of communication available.
2. The EMS Coordinator will utilize current venues of communication available such as the Internet, Intranet, EMS Workgroup, supervisors' meetings, workgroup meetings throughout the District, and District newsletters, memos, and e-mail to disseminate information related to EMS.

Element 6 and 9: Public Participation and Communication – Background

Revision: 11

Revision Date: 04/02/10

Approved By:

3. The EMS Coordinator will inform Human Resources training staff of any additional training needed to adhere to any revisions.

EMS-RELATED INFORMATION AND BIOSOLIDS REGULATORY CHANGES

As part of its EMS for biosolids and its commitment to the NBP *Code of Good Practice*, the District will post on its Internet and Intranet pages general information on its EMS and biosolids management activities, the Biosolids Reuse Policy, progress toward goals and objectives, internal audit and NBP third-party verification results, the annual EMS Program Performance and Management Review report.

Contractors are limited to construction-related and facilities maintenance activities for the District's infrastructure, Robert W. Hite Treatment Facility and the METROGRO Farm facilities. To minimize any negative impacts to the high quality of biosolids produced by the District, the Project Impact Checklist procedure followed by project initiators and Department Project Managers includes a review and signoff by the EMS Coordinator. Engineering Project Managers will be responsible for overseeing construction activities to ensure the environmental issues are followed through.

District staff will notify interested parties of pending biosolids regulatory changes by letter to provide them an opportunity to make comments directly to the regulatory agency. The letters will only be sent to the interested parties that may be directly impacted.

If and when regulatory changes are finalized, District staff will send a letter to impacted interested parties summarizing the changes.