

**METRO WASTEWATER RECLAMATION DISTRICT
BIOSOLIDS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM**

Element 6 and 9: Public Participation and Communication

Original Issue Date	Revision	Revision Date	Approved By
12/11/02	13	10/29/14	

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 BMP 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 Metro 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. In addition, private farmer and private farmer neighbor surveys were implemented in 2006 and 2010. The value of future follow-up surveys will be continue to be evaluated.

The Inquiry and Complaint (I&C) database has been productive in providing feedback on the BMP. The I&C database is an Intranet-based database accessible by several Metro District employees who can enter information and also review the contents. Requests for information about biosolids and the BMP can come into the District from several external sources, including questions submitted via e-forms embedded in the District’s Internet site that was deployed in March 2011, e-mails, and phone calls. The I&C database helps the District track biosolids and BMP-related questions to ensure biosolids and BMP-related queries and complaints are resolved and questions are answered. It also helps the District identify complaint or query trends so resources can be deployed as needed.

The Metro 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, employee newsletters, a biannual external newsletter concerning the District’s METROGRO products for farm audiences, an annual report, and news releases that are sent to area media when there is news to announce. (The preceding list is not meant to be 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 Metro might wish to communicate about activities on the METROGRO Farm, distribution of biosolids in eastern Colorado, and about our biosolids management program. We therefore place the *METROGRO Update* newsletter in this paper as a paid advertising insert twice a year to insure wide distribution in that targeted geographic area. With the cessation of compost production in 2009, the District may reevaluate some communication outreach activities to determine the usefulness of the activities in the face of having no compost to sell.

A Board of Directors that represents the member municipalities of the Metro District oversees all activities. The Board of Directors approves investments in capital improvements, the annual operating budget, and

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associated decisions on user charges and bond financing. They also provide broad policy guidance. Public concerns and issues are addressed in the BMP Program Performance and Management Review report that is presented to the Board at Committee meetings annually.

Any feedback received through the Metro 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 Metro 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 BMP.

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PURPOSE

The purpose of this procedure is to define the Metro District’s overall approach and methods for reaching out to various publics and getting input from interested parties on its METROGRO® Biosolids Management Program (BMP).

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 Metro District’s biosolids activities and BMP.

REFERENCES

- NBP National Manual of Good Practice
- Element #2: Biosolids Management Policy
- Element #5: Goals and Objectives for Continual Improvement
- Element #15 and #17: BMP Program Performance and Management Review Report
- Element #16: Internal BMP 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 Metro District to involve interested parties and the general public in its biosolids management program, including establishing improvement goals and objectives.

RESPONSIBLE PERSONS

- Originator – BMP Facilitator
- Initial Reviewer – RR&R Technical Services Officer
- Employee(s) Performing Task(s) –

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- BMP Facilitator
- Public Information Officer
- Office of the Manager
- Director of Resource Recovery and Reuse
- Final Approval – Director of RR&R

RELATED TRAINING

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

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PROCEDURAL STEPS

Management of Inquiries and Complaints

1. The Metro District's receptionist/switchboard operator, or other point of contact will direct incoming calls, faxes, or queries as follows to the Director of RR&R, the RR&R Technical Services Officer or the RR&R Superintendent:
 - METROGRO® Products
 - General Biosolids questions
 - METROGRO Farm
 - BMP/Biosolids Performance
 - Private Land Application
 - Tours – METROGRO Farm
 - Odors – Application Site

2. The Metro District's Internet web site will direct incoming email or queries related to the items above to the following District staff:
 - Public Information Officer
 - Director of RR&R
 - RR&R Technical Services Officer
 - RR&R Superintendent

3. The Metro District's receptionist/switchboard operator, Internet web site, or other point of initial public contact will direct incoming calls, faxes, e-mail, or queries as follows to the Public Information Officer (PIO) or the Public Information Assistant (PIO Assistant). The PIO or PIO Assistant will respond as directed and appropriate to
 - Media Inquiries
 - Individual citizen queries
 - Public Education assistance requests
 - Health/Environmental Concerns
 - Tours of the RWHTF

4. The Metro District's receptionist/switchboard operator or other point of contact will direct incoming calls, faxes, e-mail, or queries as follows to the Environmental Services Department:
 - Odors – RWHTF

5. The Metro District's receptionist/switchboard operator or other point of contact will direct incoming calls, faxes, e-mail, or queries as follows to Records Management:
 - CORA

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6. If a Metro District employee taking a phone call cannot locate the appropriate contact listed above for an immediate response to questions in categories one and two above, the District employee will then leave a message with the RR&R Technical Services Officer. Queries in categories three through five will be responded to by the appropriate department or division.
7. The Metro District employee taking the call will attempt to collect as much information as possible from the caller and complete the form.
8. The Metro District employee taking the call will inform the caller/questioner that the appropriate person is not available at that time to take the call but they will forward the query or complaint and the appropriate District personnel will attempt to contact them within 48 hours.
9. If the question or query falls into categories one (1) or two (2) above, the inquiry/complaint is submitted to the I&C database by the RR&R Technical Services Officer or their designee and a copy of the form will be automatically e-mailed to the appropriate personnel for a response.
10. The appropriate personnel will contact the questioner/questioner within 48 hours in an effort to respond to the inquiry or complaint.
11. Once an inquiry or complaint in categories one (1) and two (2) above has been handled by RR&R staff, the RR&R Technical Services Officer or their designee will follow-up and will close out the form noting the final resolution. Queries/complaints in categories three through five will be handled by the Public Information Officer or Records Management. No reports of the resolution or response will be sent to the RR&R Technical Services Officer as these are not items for the I&C database. If any inquiry or complaint has a biosolids component, the information will be provided to RR&R for inclusion in the I&C database.
12. Each month, the RR&R Administrative Specialist or their designee will review the report of all open I&C inquiries and complaints, and contact the responsible staff person on any inquiry or complaint still open for resolution.
13. The RR&R Administrative Specialist or their designee will close or follow-up further on I&C records based on review of the monthly report.
14. The RR&R Administrative Specialist or their designee will send an email to the RR&R Technical Service office and Director of RR&R each month, providing a summary of their review of the I&C database.
15. Information gathered from these I&C databases may be considered in setting goals and objectives for the coming year as appropriate.

Management of Internal Communication

1. As Metro 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.

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2. The BMP Facilitator will utilize current venues of communication available such as the Internet, Intranet, BMP Workgroup, supervisors' meetings, workgroup meetings throughout the Metro District, and District newsletters, memos, and e-mail to disseminate information related to BMP.
3. The RR&R BMP Facilitator will inform Human Resources training staff of any additional training needed to adhere to any revisions.

BMP-Related Information and Biosolids Regulatory Changes

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

Contractors are limited to construction-related and facilities maintenance activities for the Metro 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 RR&R Technical Services Officer. Engineering Project Managers will be responsible for overseeing construction activities to ensure the environmental issues are followed through.

Metro 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, Metro District staff will send a letter to impacted interested parties summarizing the changes.