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Biosolids Permit Fee Focus Sheet

This Focus sheet is intended to help answer questions you might have concerning biosolids permit fees.

Permit Fees

- 1. If you are required to obtain coverage under this permit, you must pay an annual biosolids permit fee to the Department of Ecology. Permit fees are based on the number of residences or residential equivalents contributing to your biosolids management system and are calculated according to WAC 173-308-320.*
- 2. If you fail to pay a permit fee, the department can revoke your coverage under this permit.*
- 3. You must pay biosolids permit fees within forty-five days after the department mails a billing statement.*
- 4. The department assesses biosolids permit fees on an annual basis for the fiscal year, July 1 through June 30. The permit fees apply regardless of the date of your coverage under this permit.*
- 5. Receiving-only facilities, centralized septage facilities, and persons who apply septage to the land may submit periodic partial payments based on the estimated residential equivalent value if the requirements in WAC 173-308-320 (4) are met.*

What authority does Ecology have to charge a biosolids

permit fee?

The 1992 Legislature granted Ecology authority to collect biosolids permit fees under Chapter 90.48 RCW. The 1997 Legislature modified that authority and it is now included under Chapter 70.95J RCW.

Why is a permit fee needed?

State law requires Ecology to develop and implement a biosolids program. Washington recognizes biosolids as a resource, but important requirements must be met to ensure that its end uses are safe and beneficial. Ecology implements and oversees technical requirements for biosolids management as well as a permitting system to assure compliance. The law requires Ecology to support the biosolids program with permit fees.

Who has to pay a biosolids permit fee?

Ecology will establish the types of facilities required to pay a biosolids permit fee by rule, but expects to collect fees from all Treatment Works Treating Domestic Sewage, which are the facilities subject to permitting under the biosolids program. Examples are municipal wastewater treatment plants, privately owned systems treating only domestic sewage, septage appliers and treatment facilities, compost facilities with biosolids as a feedstock, and certain beneficial use facilities that elect to come under permit.

Haven't municipalities already been paying a biosolids fee?

Yes. Starting in July 1993 Ecology collected a fee from municipal wastewater treatment plants in the form of a surcharge totaling five percent of their annual wastewater permit fee. Ecology agreed to eliminate the surcharge when stakeholders supported a long-term funding source for the state biosolids program.

How and when will the biosolids permit fee be billed?

The Solid Waste & Financial Assistance Program implements the

biosolids program. The Water Quality Program has a billing system already in place. The Solid Waste and Financial Assistance Program plans to join the Water Quality program in a unified billing system. We hope the combined system will be more convenient for fee payers. The first charge for biosolids permit fees is expected to appear on billing statements mailed out in early 1998.

Will I still have to pay a local health department biosolids permit fee?

Possibly. The state biosolids program does not generate enough funds to support local health department involvement. Ecology will offer delegation of state biosolids program authority to local health departments, which will have the options of accepting, deferring the program to the state, or implementing separate local programs. Ecology will try to provide grants or other support to local health departments for biosolids related activities. Local health departments may need to collect fees if they wish to continue playing a role in biosolids management. The 1997 Legislature authorized Ecology to work with the regulated community and local health departments to develop a fee system that supports local health department involvement while reducing local fees paid by permit holders.

How will biosolids fee money be used?

Ecology will collect biosolids permit fees and deposit them in the Biosolids Permit Fee Account of the State Treasury. The Legislature determines how much of the fee money Ecology is authorized to spend. Chapter 70.95J RCW allows the use of fees for processing permit applications and modifications, reviewing related plans and documents, monitoring, evaluating, conducting inspections, overseeing performance of delegated program elements, technical assistance, and overhead costs associated with these activities.

How is the amount of the fee determined?

RCW 70.95J directs Ecology to base fees on residential

equivalents where possible. Actual fees will be set by rule. For consistency, the Solid Waste and Financial Assistance Program will use the same residential equivalent values determined under the Wastewater Discharge Permit Fee Program. When a value for residential equivalents is not available, Ecology will estimate one or the fee will be based on other applicable criteria.

How much will Ecology collect in permit fees?

Ecology is authorized to spend \$567,000 dollars in biosolids permit fees during the 1997-1999 biennium. Ecology intends to match fee collection as closely as possible to the authorized spending level. If more than \$567,000 dollars are collected, the excess will be held in the Biosolids Permit Fee Account subject to future spending appropriations by the Legislature. Fees can then be adjusted to match appropriation levels, if necessary.

How can I be involved in the fee rule process and what do I do if I have questions?

A permit fee section will be added to the biosolids rule Ecology is developing. There will be public hearings on the rule, probably in late 1997 or early 1998. Be sure your name is on Ecology's list of persons interested in biosolids program development. Look for notices in the mail and also in the State Register and newspapers. Become involved in a trade organization or other group that participates in the development of the state biosolids program.

To be sure your name is on Ecology's interested party list, or if you have any general questions about the state biosolids program, contact Kyle Dorsey at (360) 407-6107, send an e-mail to kdor461@ecy.wa.gov, or write to the Washington State Department of Ecology, PO Box 47600, Olympia, WA 98504-7600.

Ecology is an equal opportunity agency.

If you have special accommodation needs, contact [Kyle Dorsey](#) at (360) 407-6107(voice), or (360) 407-6006(TDD).

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