



SANITATION DISTRICTS OF LOS ANGELES COUNTY



May 16, 2019

The Honorable Henry Stern  
California State Senate  
State Capitol, Room 5080  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: Budget Proposal to Fund Fire Ravaged Land Reclamation Research: SUPPORT**

Dear Senator Stern:

The undersigned organizations strongly support your proposal to appropriate state funds for research relating to fire ravaged land reclamation using biosolids. Our agencies and organizations collectively support a comprehensive research proposal to quantify the reclamation attributes of biosolids application on fire ravaged land. A successful demonstration project will give important insights into the potential for utilizing California sourced biosolids to reclaim and stabilize wildfire burn scars in the aftermath of catastrophic wildfire events.

Research Details:

Reclamation of fire ravaged land and the reduction of the potential severity of future fires is an extremely high priority for areas prone to such devastation. Virtually all of California and all drought, and post drought, stricken areas are at increased risk for devastating fires. This demonstration project would evaluate and quantify the benefits of using biosolids to reclaim fire ravaged land. The successful use of biosolids for this purpose would be of critical importance for all of California as it will address a major safety and economic problem for society and the state at large while simultaneously creating another beneficial use opportunity for biosolids. There is a need to conduct further research to quantify and understand the benefits of biosolids for these purposes to gain widespread acceptance by regulators and the public for their use to mitigate fire ravaged and prone areas.

Fire ravaged land is subject to increased erosion, contributes to impaired water quality, and suffers from impaired ecological services including habitat support for vegetation and animal life, and experiences the destruction of soil quality. Biosolids can mitigate adverse impacts at fire impacted sites by increasing soil organic matter, nutrients, and water holding capacity. This will result in improved water quality, reduced erosion, enhanced terrestrial carbon sequestration, and the promotion of healthy forage production. We expect that increased vegetation will remain green through the fire intense summer season which, if well established, would therefore provide a break in future fires and preclude the fire from spreading unabated. These vital ecological services are inextricably linked to the effective management of fire prone areas and soil quality. The overarching objective of the research is to evaluate the ability of biosolids land application to restore and enhance the ecological services provided by fire impacted landscapes. The ecological services serving as the primary focus include: 1) water quality protection, 2) future wildfire risk reduction, 3) terrestrial carbon sequestration, and 4) vegetative biodiversity, thereby reducing significant moisture runoff, soil erosion, and surface water deterioration.

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Our research team has identified a pilot site at the Rancho Las Virgenes Composting Facility operated by the Las Virgenes-Triunfo Joint Powers Authority (JPA) as our initial research site. The JPA suffered significant damage to its facilities during the Woolsey Fire in the Fall of 2018. A significant burn scar at the Rancho Las Virgenes Composting facility in West Los Angeles County has been identified as an optimal site for our initial research plot. This site is ideally situated as JPA staff has offered to collect necessary samples and is central to our research partners who will be supplying biosolids products and research services.

Budget Request:

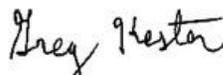
Our research team has secured \$82,500 in pledged local funding and in-kind services from multiple public agencies interested in the outcome of this project. We are seeking an additional state investment of \$200,000 to cover the remaining research costs and necessary overhead required by the University of California to complete the analysis of the project. We believe this funding request may fall within the purview of the Senate Budget Subcommittee on Resources, and particularly may fit in well with the Budget package relating to wildfire prevention and relief. We are ready and willing to work with CalFire, the US Forest Service, State Water Board or other state entity providing oversight on the project.

In conclusion, we strongly support this budget proposal and urge the Legislature to please consider Senator Stern's request to appropriate funding to complete this important research effort. Thank you for your consideration of our comments, and we look forward to answering any questions as they relate to our research proposal.

Sincerely,



Jessica Gauger  
Director of Legislative Advocacy  
CASA



Greg Kester  
Director of Renewable Resource Programs  
CASA



Zachary Kay  
Biosolids Coordinator  
Santa Rosa Water



David W. Pedersen  
General Manager/Administering Agent  
Las Virgenes Municipal Water District  
Triunfo Sanitation District



Sharon Green  
Legislative & Regulatory Liaison  
Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County



Enrique C. Zaldivar, P.E.  
Director and General Manager  
LA Sanitation and Environment



Shivaji Deshmukh  
General Manager  
Inland Empire Utilities Agency



David R. Williams  
Executive Director  
Bay Area Clean Water Agencies



Eileen White  
Director of Wastewater  
East Bay Municipal Utility District



Jim Graydon, P.E.  
Principal  
Woodard & Curran



David J. Shawver  
Board Chairman  
Orange County Sanitation District



Debbie Webster  
Executive Officer  
Central Valley Clean Water Agencies



Layne Baroldi  
VP Technical Services/Government Affairs  
Synagro



Karri J. Ving  
Business Services Manager  
San Francisco Public Utilities Commission