



## **MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

### **LEGISLATIVE COMMENT**

**DATE: 01/16/13 BILL NO.: MC/PG 108-13**

**SUBJECT: AGRICULTURE – NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT -- EXEMPTION**

**COMMITTEE: PRINCE GEORGE’S COUNTY BI-COUNTY COMMITTEE**

**MDA POSITION: OPPOSE**

#### **EXPLANATION:**

The legislation would exempt the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC)’s wastewater treatment plants from any nutrient management regulations promulgated by the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA). An amendment has also been prepared that clarifies that the legislation applies to sewage sludge that originates from a WSSC wastewater treatment plant, but that is being hauled by a contractor.

#### **COMMENT:**

MDA’s Nutrient Management regulations are necessary to achieve consistency in the way all sources of nutrients are managed, and to ensure that Maryland meets its nutrient reduction goals. These goals are an essential part of the comprehensive Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP), a multi-state planning process to achieve nutrient and sediment reductions to protect and restore the health of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries by 2025.

MDA has implemented an approach to the revised regulations that will allow thousands of farmers and hundreds of wastewater treatment operations time to secure the financial and technical resources necessary to comply with the most immediate nutrient management provisions. The winter ban provision of the regulations will help reduce the risk of nutrient runoff into the bay during winter when there is not a growing crop to utilize the nutrients. The proposal to de-regulate the management of certain sewage sludge is contrary to legislation established decades ago. To exempt one of these sources, such as the WSSC, compromises the objective of the regulations and invites additional requests for exemption, further eroding the effectiveness of the nutrient management program. Exempting certain sources creates compliance enforcement challenges and public perception questions when the winter ban becomes effective. MDA respectfully requests that the Delegation oppose the legislation.