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ADEQ Officials Announce that New Water Quality General Permit Available for Preparing Biosolids for Land Application

PHOENIX (Jan. 13, 2014) – Arizona Department of Environmental Quality officials announced today that a new streamlined water quality control permit is available for wastewater treatment facilities that process sewage sludge for application as fertilizer.

Biosolids are nutrient-rich organic materials resulting from the treatment of sewage sludge. When treated and processed, sewage sludge becomes biosolids, which can be safely recycled and applied as fertilizer to sustainably improve and maintain productive soils and stimulate plant growth. Only biosolids that meet the most stringent standards spelled out in federal and state rules can be approved for use as fertilizer.

Coverage under the general permit will be available for those Treatment Works Treating Domestic Sewage (TWTDS) who prepare biosolids for land application that do not otherwise have coverage for the preparation of biosolids under an Arizona Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit.

A general permit is a cost-effective and efficient way for ADEQ to authorize discharges from similar facilities. General permits also benefit applicants by significantly reducing the cost and shortening time necessary to obtain permit coverage. Individual permits previously costing as much as \$30,000 and taking up to a year to issue will now be available as general permits costing between \$1,250 and \$2,000 and be issued in much less time.

Further, as general permits are developed to restrict discharges at multiple facilities, the requirements are at least as stringent as would be required under an individual permit. Thus, cost and time savings do not come at the expense of environmental protection.

“We are always looking for ways to reduce permit processing times while maintaining the same or higher level of environmental protection,” said ADEQ Director Henry Darwin. “It generally takes a wastewater treatment plant from nine to 12 months to receive an individual permit. This new general permit will take less than four months to process and will offer the same or better water quality protection due to comprehensive monitoring.”

TWTDS already with individual permits may be eligible for one of the new general permits at the time of renewal if the requirements for coverage can be met. The new general permit application is at <http://www.azdeq.gov/environ/water/permits/gen.html>.

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