

**Statement by
Maude Elizabeth Davis
Resident of
Upper Mount Bethel Township
Northampton County, Pennsylvania
Before the
House Environmental Resources and Energy Committee
Hearing on House Resolution 426 (Biosolids/Sewage Sludge)
October 14, 2014**

Chairman Miller , Chairman Vitali and members of the Committee, I am a resident of Upper Mount Bethel Township, a small pastoral town in Northampton County nestled along the banks of the Delaware River. The Department of Environmental Protection Agency has approved a Class B Sewage Sludge permit for an adjacent property owner. I am concerned for my family's and my health and well being. I am also apprehensive about the greater, long lasting environmental effects posed by sewage sludge. You see, my property is down hill from the approved Class B site. The land has two ponds on it. Migrating geese find seasonal refuge in the water. Intermittent streams flow from these ponds to Allegheny Creek and eventually down to the Delaware.

I first learned about the sewage sludge permit by reading a flyer that was left in my mail box by a group of concerned neighbors. They were asking for support in getting the Township's Board of Supervisors to pass an Ordinance. This initiative was to assert our Township's Constitutional rights to local self governance -- including the right to ban the practice of land applying sewage sludge. Other Pennsylvania townships have passed similar Ordinances. In Tamaqua Borough, sewage sludge was being dumped into abandoned mine pits on the edge of town. Nearby residents began to suffer from deadly health problems such as cancer. School nurse and Counselwoman, Cathy Miorelli, championed the passage of Tamaqua's anti-sewage sludge Ordinance. Our township Board of Supervisors did not. They felt that their hands had been tied by the State's power to regulate sludge.

If sewage sludge is hazardous, what does the EPA have to say about it? In 1993 in Section 40 of the Code of Federal Regulations the EPA sets the Standards for the Use or Disposal of Sewage Sludge in Part 503. Part 503.9 outlines the document's general definitions. Section (t) defines a pollutant as something that can cause "death, disease, behavioral abnormalities, cancer, genetic mutations, physiological malfunctions (including malfunction in reproduction), or physical deformations in either organisms (humans) or offspring (children) of the organisms." As pollutants can cause such dire and far reaching threats to human health, it is naturally important to make sure there aren't any contaminants in sewage sludge. However, the EPA's 2009 Targeted National Sewage Sludge Survey found that sludge contains a broad range of mutagenic and neurotoxic chemicals. A more recent report from the EPA sounds an alarm. Just last month, on Sept 29, 2014 the US EPA Office of Inspector General published Report No. 14-P-0363. In this document on sewage sludge the contributors assert:

Management controls put in place by the EPA to regulate and control hazardous chemical discharges from sewage treatment plants to water resources have limited effectiveness. The EPA regulates hazardous chemical discharges to and from sewage treatment plants, but these regulations are not effective in controlling the discharge of hundreds of hazardous chemicals to surface waters such as lakes and streams. Sewage treatment plant staff do not monitor for hazardous chemicals discharged by industrial users. This is due to a general regulatory focus on the priority pollutants list that has not been updated since 1981, limited monitoring requirements, limited coordination between EPA offices, a lack of tracking hazardous waste notifications required for submittal by industrial users, or a lack of knowledge of discharges reported by industrial users under the Toxics Release Inventory. Except for EPA Region 9, sewage treatment plant permits generally include very few monitoring requirements or effluent limits, which can limit enforcement actions.

The EPA developed whole effluent toxicity test results as a mechanism to identify toxic chemicals such as hazardous discharges to sewage treatment plants. However, these are not required for all permits, and are not tracked by the EPA to verify that sewage treatment plants are reporting results as required. Moreover, exceedances of chemical limits in permits and toxicity tests do not trigger notification to enforcement programs. Consequently, the EPA may not be aware of chemical discharge or toxicity exceedances that should be addressed to minimize potentially harmful contamination of water resources.

This government report articulates what many residents in Mt. Bethel fear: **hazardous chemicals are in the many loads of sewage sludge that are regularly and systematically being spread in Northampton County.** As the State has tied the hands of Township Supervisors to stop the application of sludge and the EPA cannot guarantee that sludge is benign, who then will protect Pennsylvania's environment and citizenry? The House Environmental Resources and Energy Committee? I urge you to review the use of sewage sludge by land application. Thank you.

Works Cited

United States. Environmental Protection Agency. (1993) Standards for the Use and Disposal of Sewage Sludge. Washington DC: Government Printing Office.

United States. Environmental Protection Agency. Office of Inspector General. (2014). More Action is Needed to Protect Water Resources from Unmonitored Hazardous. Washington DC: Government Printing Office. Report No. 14-P-0363