



# Environmental News

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## **EPA TO EXPAND AND STRENGTHEN SEWAGE SLUDGE RESEARCH, PROGRAMS**

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) today announced a strategy for expanding and strengthening sewage sludge (biosolids) research and programs. Under the strategy, which responds to recommendations of the National Academy of Sciences' National Research Council, EPA will undertake the following activities:

- update the science underlying the rule by conducting research in priority areas;
- strengthen the sewage sludge program by incorporating results of research, both within and outside EPA; and
- continue ongoing efforts to increase partnerships and communication with the public and other stakeholders.

"Today's announcement is EPA's effort to address the recommendations of the National Academy of Sciences as well as citizen concerns while maintaining the beneficial uses of biosolids," said G. Tracy Mehan, III, Assistant Administrator for Water.

A *Federal Register* notice seeking public comment is expected to be published this week. A pre-publication copy of the notice is posted online at <http://www.epa.gov/waterscience/biosolids/>.

Two years ago, EPA commissioned the National Academy of Sciences to independently review the scientific basis of the regulations governing the land application of sewage sludge. The 18-month study, called "Biosolids Applied to Land: Advancing Standards and Practices," was published in July 2002. The National Academy of Sciences concluded that while there is no documented scientific evidence that sewage sludge regulations have failed to protect public health, there is persistent uncertainty on possible adverse health effects.

EPA is also announcing preliminary results of its review of existing sewage sludge regulations as required by the Clean Water Act, which is required every two years. The public is invited to comment in the next 90 days. Following this public comment, the agency will publish specific pollutants for possible regulation in early 2004.