



# The United Sludge-Free Alliance

## Talking Points

### Home, Garden & Real Estate Talking Points

Sewage sludge is everything that we pour down the drain from homes, businesses, industries and hospitals. It is the concentrated remains from waste water treatment plants and contains toxins, viruses, bacteria, pharmaceuticals, pathogens, chemicals and heavy metals.

Sewage sludge and biosolids - the 'greenwashed' industry term used to promote the use of sludge - are the same thing.

Over eight million tons of sewage sludge is annually land applied as a "fertilizer" to farms, parks, playgrounds and sold as bagged fertilizer. Are the parks, schoolyards and playgrounds where your family plays 'fertilized' with sewage sludge?

The government says it's legal to pour our modern toxic waste in our communities. Sewage sludge is sold as bagged and bulk 'fertilizer' with no labeling requirements. Did you just spread sludge on your home garden?

The US EPA requires testing for only nine elements and two bacteria in sewage sludge to determine if it is 'safe'. The EPA's own national testing shows 145 elements of concern in sludge samples. Why have the regulations governing sewage sludge disposal been so lacks?

The health and safety of communities where the toxic residues blow in the wind or contaminate wells and waterways is the concern of citizens who are powerless to regulate this practice. The national testing of sewage sludge/biosolids by the EPA found toxic chemicals such as PCBs, dioxin, and brominated flame retardants, remaining in treated sludge.

There is no organized state or national system to record health related problems associated with living near a property that is land applying sewage sludge. Any lack of evidence of health problems comes from the lack of a tracing system. No one is accountable for the safety of our communities, food and water.

There is an ever-growing body of anecdotal evidence that points to a wide variety of health problems - including death - that result from exposure to sludge. By living near a property that is land applying sewage sludge, your family may be at risk from the volatile mix of toxins found in sludge.

Sludge spreading next door devalues your property. Why should one municipality's sludge be allowed to diminish a rural community's tax base? Why should your sludge spreading neighbor be allowed to take away the value and pleasure of your home?

Long term affects may economically hurt residents of communities where sewage sludge is land applied. In Canada, homeowners have been successful at reducing their tax assessment due to quality of life issues surrounding sludge/biosolids application.

Properties for sale near 'sludged' farms may suffer sales decline for fair market value when compared to similar properties in other municipalities. How will your home value remain competitive with surrounding areas if your community is awash in sewage sludge?

In 2008, *McElmurray vs. United States Department of Agriculture* was decided. Losses of land and livestock arose after decades of sludge were applied to a family farm in Georgia. Now the farm is unable to grow food or livestock crops because the toxic level built up in the soil over long term sludge land application.

Since 2005, the Pennsylvania ACRE law uses your tax dollars to sue any citizen, municipality or community that tries to make stricter and safer laws about land application of sewage sludge. Under the ACRE law, our tax dollars hire the PA Attorney General and saves the sludge industry from hiring their own attorneys.

In PA, when a farmer who has used sludge, **or the neighbor of the farm that used sludge**, decides to sell their property, they must mark this on the real estate "PA Sellers Disclosure Sheet". This is listed on page four, section 17, under "Hazardous Substance and Environmental Issues" and may impact the value of the farm or neighboring home.

Private property rights are a cornerstone for our democracy. Your community may experience real estate value and health challenges if nothing is done to halt sewage sludge land application or to test sludge correctly to ensure health risks are eliminated. Health and safety becomes a concern with surrounding properties when a landowner applies sludge to a property.

Land application of sewage sludge is a state and federal issue and laws must be strengthened to reflect the serious dangers that this disposal practice imposes.