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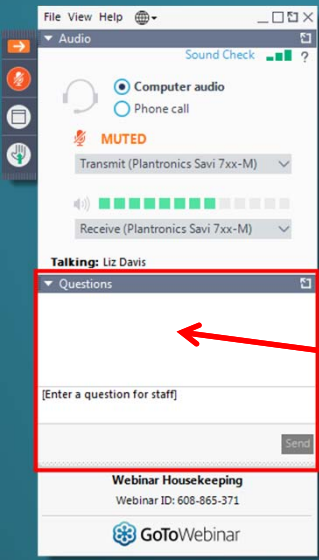
Biosolids Communications Toolkit

Thursday, February 4, 2021
3:00 – 4:00 PM ET

The Water Environment Federation logo is located in the bottom right corner of the teal slide. It features the same stylized white 'W' symbol and text as seen in the first image.

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How to Participate Today



- **Audio Modes**
 - Listen using Mic & Speakers
 - Or, select “Use Telephone” and dial the conference (please remember long distance phone charges apply).
- **Submit your questions using the Questions pane.**
- **A recording will be available for replay shortly after this webcast.**

Water Environment Federation
The water quality people!

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Biosolids Communications Toolkit

How to successfully talk about biosolids with your community

*Presented by Samantha Villegas, APR
Director of Strategic Communication Services
Raftelis*



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But First, THANK YOU

- Travis Loop, WEF
- Patrick Dube, WEF
- Allison Fore, Patrick Thomas, and Dominic Brose, MWRD
- Natalie Sierra and John Willis, Brown & Caldwell
- Manon Fisher and Karri Ving, San Francisco Public Utilities Commission
- Ned Beecher, New England Biosolids
- Christopher Peot, DCWater
- Trevor Brown, Region of Waterloo
- Maile Lono-Batura, NW Biosolids
- William Toffey, MA Biosolids
- Mike McGill, Water PIO
- Jean Creech, City of Charlotte, NC

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Agenda

1. Review overall challenge
2. The importance of proper methodology
3. The quick and dirty (top 10)
4. How to use strategy to meet your communication goals
5. Messaging about biosolids that works
6. Handling negative reactions
7. Guest case studies
8. Images that make your point



DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

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Why Is It Hard To Talk About Biosolids?

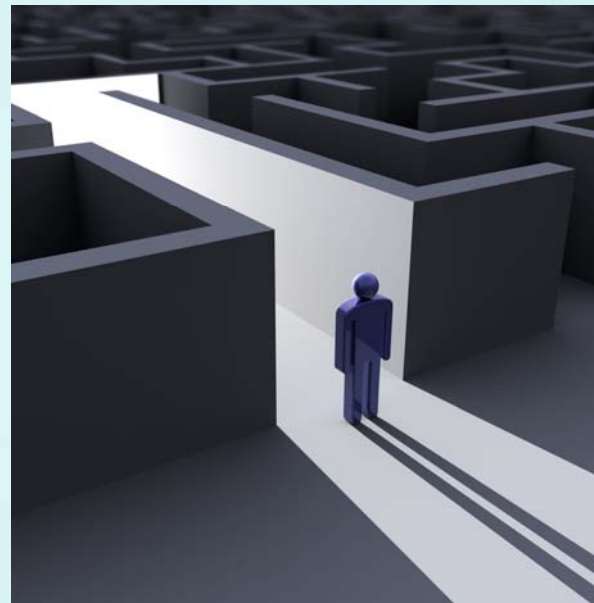
- Tough terminology
- Misinformation
- Lack of science literacy
- Sensational articles
- Fear



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The Importance of Proper Methodology

- Proven techniques
- Keeps you focused
- Uses resources wisely
- Applies lessons learned
- Enables coordinated effort



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One Size Does NOT Fit All

 GROUND LEVEL	 SUBSURFACE	 DIG DEEP
Simplified	Higher complexity	Most complex
Inexpensive	Higher cost	Requires investment
Quick	More involved	Takes time

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If You Do Nothing Else,
DO THESE 10 THINGS

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1. Use the Message Platform

Start using the message platform in this toolkit in all your materials. Be sure to note terms to avoid. Update all existing materials and share revised materials with your staff.

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2. Post a Web Page

Make sure you have a web page dedicated to biosolids. In addition to facts and figures, share stories of real people doing the work, and those benefitting from biosolids.

Include a way for those who read your web page to get in touch with someone for more information.

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3. Engage on Social Media

Start a conversation on social media!
Use the sample posts we have provided in this toolkit.

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4. Use Beautiful, Accurate Images

Improve your photography. It's so true a picture is worth much more than words, so show, don't tell. We offer some tips on taking photos and using imagery in this toolkit.

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5. Talk to Your Leadership

Make the business case to leadership for taking a measured, proactive approach to communicating about biosolids, using the guidance we provide.

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6. Prioritize Stakeholders

Prioritize your stakeholders to save time and resources so you are certain to be communicating with the folks with the most influence in your success. Check out the stakeholder chart for guidance.

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7. Engage Influencers

Identify partners and influencers who can add credibility to your story and help you get the messages to audiences beyond your reach. Talk to them about your messages and discuss collaboration opportunities.

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8. Create A Presentation

Create a presentation about your program that can be customized for a variety of audiences. Discuss the process for creating biosolids, the benefits, the applications and use lots of imagery and data to tell your story.

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9. Invite People In

Invite the media, customers, elected officials, and others to take a tour of your plant. Explain the process for creating biosolids and describe the end users and end products, highlighting the benefits.

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10. Prepare for Tough Talks

Have a plan for dealing with disagreeable people. Consult the difficult conversations section and discuss with your leadership who will handle these situations. Prepare messages in advance and remember to seek understanding first, show empathy, then facts.

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HOW TO CREATE

A Strategic Communication & Outreach Plan

THE FOUR STEP PROCESS

This slide features a large teal number '4' on the right side, which contains the text 'THE FOUR STEP PROCESS'. On the left, there is a green box with the text 'HOW TO CREATE' and the main title 'A Strategic Communication & Outreach Plan' below it.

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Step One:

RESEARCH

This slide features a large teal number '1' on the right side. On the left, there is a green box with the text 'Step One:' and the word 'RESEARCH' in large teal letters below it.

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Understand Your Stakeholders & Environment

Research can help you define and identify:

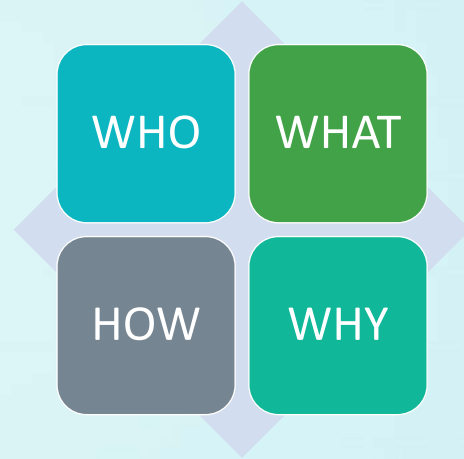
WHO Do you need to reach?

WHAT Do you want them to know, do, or believe?

HOW Will you reach them?

What environment will you be working in, meaning what external factors will impact your success?

What messages should you convey to change their awareness, attitude or behavior?



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Step Two:

PLANNING

A large, stylized number '2' graphic in teal and light blue, positioned on the right side of the slide.

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Key Strategies to Consider

- Internal Outreach
- Partners/Influencers
- Local Media
- Social Media
- Digital Advertising
- Events and Tours



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Step Three:

IMPLEMENTATION

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Sample Channel Plan

Audience	Message	Channel	Timeframe	Resources Needed
Environmental Groups	Biosolids are an endlessly renewable resource	Their monthly meetings Submit articles for member newsletter or blog	Monthly	Article Slide deck Handout (fact sheet)
Local Media	Biosolids help create resilient local economies	Contact via email or Twitter	At Milestones Quarterly	A strong pitch with statistics, infographics, and/or interview subjects
Customers	Biosolids help beautify communities affordably	Partners (affinity groups) local media social media	Weekly	Content for partners to share Images, infographics Video Stories

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Step Four:

EVALUATION



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Techniques for Evaluation



GROUND LEVEL

Compare work to goals and objectives

Poll your colleagues for feedback



SUBSURFACE

Develop online poll

Seek outcomes, not outputs

Dig into SM metrics



DIG DEEP

Full survey

Focus groups

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Talking About Biosolids

Words That Are Relatable and Understandable

- Reuse
- Recycle
- Affordable
- Safe
- Poop
- Natural

Words to Avoid

- Sludge
- Toxic
- Organic
- Effluent
- Dumping
- Humanure

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Talking About Biosolids

Key Overarching Message

Biosolids begin as waste—your poop to be exact. Scientists developed a wastewater treatment process that turns what you flush into valuable nutrients and renewable energy. This is a safe, inexpensive way to keep your utility bill low, improve our environment, and provide farmers with better soil.

Biosolids are an innovative way we recycle human poop into renewable energy and resources.

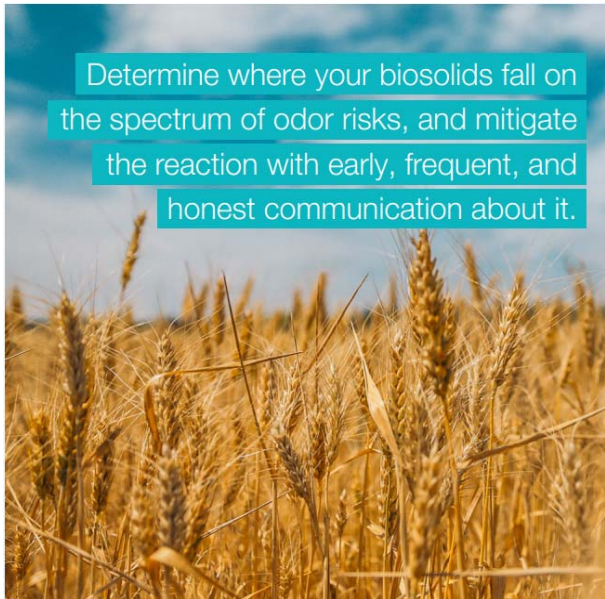
Utilities across the country have been safely making biosolids for decades.

Biosolids are a safe, natural, and endlessly renewable resource that improves our environment, lowers costs of wastewater treatment, and supports farmers.

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How to Address Negativity

- Get out into the community
- Use the guidance here for working with the traditional media and social media.
- Try and get this done before the first truck delivers the product.
- Don't ignore the issue or minimize it



Determine where your biosolids fall on the spectrum of odor risks, and mitigate the reaction with early, frequent, and honest communication about it.

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GLWA **Water System**

5 Treatment Plants

816 miles of transmission main

3.8 MILLION PEOPLE SERVED

88 Member Partners across **112** communities

Treatment capacity of **1,720** million gallons per day

3 Water Intakes

19 BOOSTER PUMP STATIONS

1,698 SQ. MILE service area

To exceed our customer's expectations by utilizing best practices in the treatment MISSION and transmission of water and wastewater, while promoting health communities and economic growth.

SEPTEMBER 2019

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GLWA Wastewater System

- 2.8 MILLION PEOPLE SERVED**
- 195 miles of trunk sewers & interceptors
- 19 Member Partners across 79 communities
- Treatment capacity of 1,700 million gallons per day
- 8 CSOs
- 3 Interceptors
- 9 PUMP STATIONS
- 944 SQ. MILE service area

Through regional collaboration, GLWA strives to be the provider of choice, dedicated to VISION efficiently and effectively delivering the nation's best water and sewer services in partnership with our member partners.

SEPTEMBER 2019

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Background

"Today a story is not told until its sold."

- ❖ The **majority** of journalists are committed to telling the full story - including balanced viewpoints in their coverage. Unfortunately, there are some that know the story they want to tell, or are using their platform to **advance a specific point of view** that they may hold and only go through the motions to produce a fair and balanced story
- ❖ GLWA found itself in just this situation in 2020, when we were contacted by a freelance reporter working on a story about biosolids and PFAS.
- ❖ We had been contacted by the reporter for a story on biosolids the year before, but he published the story before we could get him the answers to his questions (within hours).

Biosolids: mix human waste with toxic chemicals, then spread on crops

The Great Lakes water authority, which operates one of the nation's largest biosolid programs, declined interview requests from the Guardian. Despite sludge's chemical makeup, the wastewater industry bills biosolids as "green" and even sells it as organic fertilizer in stores like Walmart and Lowe's, though packaging doesn't indicate that it's composed of human and industrial waste.

GLWA Great Lakes Water Authority


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Previous Experience Should Inform Future Interactions – Not Stop Them

- Responded quickly, asking for his deadline
- Asked for written questions to be sure we could provide him with the best information possible
- Engaged Executive Leadership and SMEs
- Developed comprehensive answers to the reporter’s questions – including providing appropriate data/statistics/charts
- Met the reporter’s deadline!

Despite Doing Everything Right, Things Can Go Wrong

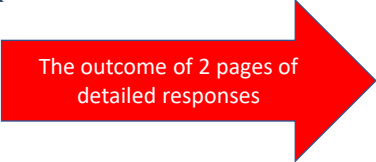
Toilet to table: Michigan farmers feed crops with 'toxic brew' of human and industrial waste



But the powerful waste-management industry and regulators are resistant to prohibition. Sludge is an expensive byproduct that's difficult to dispose of, and selling it to farmers is a cheap solution to the problem. In a statement to *Metro Times*, the GLWA – which churns out more biosolids than any of the nation's other sewerage authorities – insisted its sludge is safe.

In a written statement sent to *Metro Times*, the Great Lakes Water Authority stressed that it follows the law in testing for contaminants and said it monitors for new pollutants of concern, like PFAS.

"As regulatory agencies identify emerging pollutants, GLWA works with the agencies to develop and implement plans to minimize or eliminate the pollutant from our wastewater discharge," a spokesperson wrote.



The outcome of 2 pages of detailed responses

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Review, Assess & Set the Record Straight

Review	To Respond or Not to Respond?	Set the Record Straight
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the article: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facts • Inclusion of response information • Misstatements • Inaccuracies • <u>DO NOT</u> over-react! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holding journalists to their high standards of their profession is critical. • It's important to weigh the cost benefit of reaching out to the reporter to correct any inaccuracies, misstatements, etc. • Some things to consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will it extend the story? • Will the reporter be willing to accept your input (especially if they have a strong POV) 	<p><i>Take Control of Your Own Narrative</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you see benefit in reaching out the reporter, address the specific points that you believe to be incorrect <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be factual • Give specific examples and the correct information • Whether you choose to respond to the reporter or not, it's critical to make the correct information directly available to your stakeholders. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a Fact/Myth analysis of the issues that are incorrect in the article • Develop an FAQ about your program and its benefits • Create assets to use on social media, website, etc.



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Summary of To Dos

- Review the toolkit
- Download the materials
- Reach out if needed
- Refer to top 10 “To Do” list



To access the toolkit, go to:
www.wef.org/resources/topics/browse-topics-a-n/biosolids/

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QUESTIONS?

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Design Elements



Farms



Gardens



Energy



Safety



Environment



Climate Change



Clean Air



Economic



Innovation

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Image Library + Guidance



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Sample Social Media

 <p>From farm to table to farm! Biosolids improve soil health and increase crop yields better than chemical fertilizers do.</p>	 <p>Our poop has power! Biosolids generate enough energy to power cities like New York.</p>	 <p>Safe for gardens! Every academic research study proves that Class A biosolids are safe for use as compost in your garden.</p>
 <p>Can you say, pay dirt? Using biosolids saves farmers money, creates jobs, and lowers treatment costs.</p>	 <p>Wait, poop can do that? Biosolids are a renewable resource that can be used to create heat and power.</p>	 <p>Biosolids burn cleaner! Burning biosolids improves air quality as much as removing nearly half a million cars from our roads.</p>

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Sample Social Media: A Closer Look



Our poop has power!

Biosolids generate enough energy to power cities like New York.

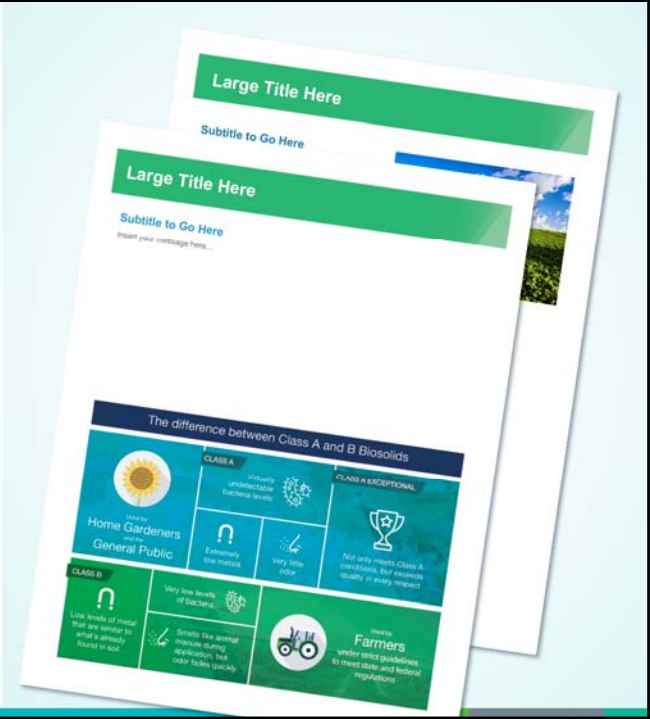
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Bill Insert Templates



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Fact Sheet Templates



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Rack Card Templates

