

HOW TO TELL YOUR BIOSOLIDS STORY

Dealing with the Media

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HOW TO TELL YOUR BIOSOLIDS STORY

- Generate positive coverage
- Acknowledge public concerns
- Present the facts
- Prepare for the media
- Manage the message
- Interview tips



WHAT'S CHANGED?

- Online news
 - Generate your own stories anytime
- Social media
 - Facebook, Twitter, etc. immediate updates
- Public acceptance
 - We ARE telling our story more effectively!
- Resource recovery
 - Value and costs are coming to light



FIRST GOOGLE ITEM

- bi·o·sol·ids

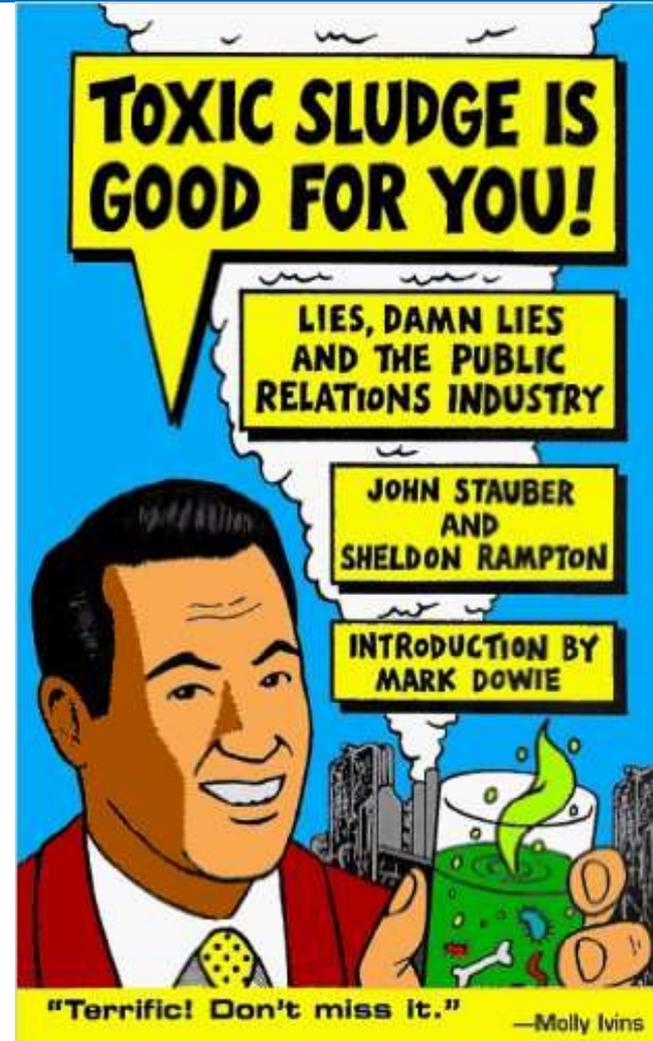
1. organic matter recycled from sewage, especially for use in agriculture.



WHO IS TELLING YOUR STORY?

Once one of the first listings on Google:

“Biosolids is the Orwellian PR euphemism for toxic sewage sludge. The name was created and chosen in a PR contest by the lobby association for sewage industry, the Water Environment Federation (WEF).”



RECENT HEADLINES

- Mercola Newsletter: [Massive Scam Threatens Your Health — by Placing Toxic Chemicals on Land, Polluting Industries Are Allowed to Bypass Clean Air and Water Regulations](#)
 - Eating nutrient-dense, real food is a primary key to staying healthy. Unfortunately, most of the food you buy is probably loaded with industrial toxins.



RECENT HEADLINES

- Environmental Health News [Opinion: A solution to the challenge of land-disposed sewage sludge](#)
 - For the sake of our health and the health of our land, we need to abolish land-disposed sewage sludge, but where will it go? The challenge and the solution are clear: Sewage sludge—consisting of semi-liquid waste obtained from processing municipal sewage—is toxic waste, and must be reduced to safer material with little or no toxicity in preparation for safe disposal. But by what technology, and at what cost to whom? Our air, soil, water and food are at risk.



RECENT HEADLINES (continued)

- The Seattle Times [Drugs found in Puget Sound salmon tainted from wastewater](#)
 - From Prozac to caffeine to cholesterol medicine, from ibuprofen to bug spray, researchers found an alphabet soup of drugs and other personal-care products in sewage-treatment wastewater and in the tissue of juvenile chinook in Puget Sound.



PLACE YOUR OWN STORY

- Start or comment on news
 - Newspapers, radio, TV
 - Social media
- Send a news release
- Call or email editors or reporters
- Newspapers, radio and TV are eager for local news
- Comment online
- Post online stories



TRADITIONAL/SOCIAL MEDIA

Use the same principals to tell your story:

- Set your goals: What do we want from the media?
- Develop 2 or 3 key messages
- Prepare your spokesperson
- Practice answering tough questions
- Offer third party contacts



KEY MESSAGES

- www.wef.org/PublicInformation/page.aspx?id=687
 - What are biosolids?
 - Why is reuse important?
 - Are there standards for quality?
 - What are results of biosolids reuse?



RESULTS OF BIOSOLIDS REUSE

- Higher Yields: In farming, biosolids reuse has been shown to produce significant improvement in crop growth and yield.
- Lower Costs: Biosolids reuse can be a cost-efficient complement to chemical fertilizers that contain inorganic chemicals with biosolids.



RESULTS OF BIOSOLIDS REUSE (continued)

- **Greater Savings:** Increased biosolids reuse enables local governments to market biosolids products and helps to offset the costs of ensuring clean water quality to their citizens.
- **A Cleaner Environment:** Biosolids reuse programs can save landfill space, transform community waste into valuable resources, and support a cleaner, more sustainable environment.



IF THE MEDIA CALLS

- Media is a key link to the public (press, TV, radio)
 - Understand their needs to help meet yours
 - ❖ Deadlines, complex and technical information
 - ❖ Highly competitive, driven by # audience
 - Reporters need good service, too
 - ❖ Be open, honest, & accessible
 - ❖ Assume their good intent
 - ❖ Get to know them; praise or critique



FACE PUBLIC CONCERNS

- Know the opposition
- It's sewage sludge, a pollutant on crops
- Short list of concerns:
 - EPA 40 CFR Part 503 not enough
 - No restriction of synthetic chemicals
 - Weak limits on heavy metals
 - Inadequate pathogen protection
 - No labeling requirement
 - Odor, traffic, dust



PRESENT THE FACTS

- Define biosolids
- EPA regulations
- DEQ and local oversight may be stricter
- Only lawful disposal options:
 - Land application (to fertilize crops or reclaim mined lands)
 - Landfill or surface disposal
 - Incineration



SET THE STAGE

- Produced by 16,000+ publicly owned wastewater treatment facilities
- Oregon recycles 99%
- Volume your agency produces
 - CWS = 31 dry tons daily



BENEFITS

- Higher Crop Yields
- Lower Costs than chemical fertilizers
- Greater Savings for local governments
- Cleaner Environment



YES, THE YUCK FACTOR

- It's true, people often think biosolids are yucky.
- Show that they're not:
 - Give them a sample
 - Tour the facility or application site
- Always say it is “treated” material
- It's a valuable product that isn't going away.



BIOSOLIDS ARE NATURAL

- Biosolids are:
 - Natural byproduct of community wastewater
 - Safe when used per EPA and DEQ rules
 - Similar odor as other fertilizers
 - Cost effective disposal and recycling
 - Beneficial resource recycled as fertilizer and soil amendment
 - Relatively low risk--No proven serious health impacts; some anecdotal minor health impacts
 - Other benefits



MANAGE THE MESSAGE: KEY MESSAGES

- Your agency/department messages:
 - Our business is to protect public health and the environment.
 - We provide cost effective service.
 - Our community helped decide to recycle biosolids.
- Biosolids messages:
 - Created from natural process
 - Carefully regulated by strict EPA and DEQ regulations
 - Treated to destroy harmful pathogens and reduce odors
 - Land application returns valuable nutrients to soil



TARGET MESSAGES

- Urban audiences:
 - Cost effective, sustainable alternative to chemical fertilizer
 - Comparable odor to other natural soil amendments
 - Applied in a manner to protect waterways
 - Tightly regulated to ensure safety
- Rural audiences:
 - Tested for use on crops
 - Applied to match the needs of the crops
 - Soils and groundwater is monitored regularly
 - Cost effective way to improve soil and stimulate plant growth



THIRD PARTY SOURCES

- Reporters will look for others to interview
- Give them knowledgeable, credible sources
- Develop positive relationships with:
 - Industry associations ACWA, NBMA, PNCWA, WEF
 - University and research groups
 - Farmers
 - Health officials
 - Regulatory agencies
 - Environmental interest groups



NOTES ON PUBLIC OUTRAGE

- Outrage is not about risk, it's about:
 - Involuntary—They weren't asked if biosolids should be applied.
 - Unknown—They don't know about biosolids.
 - Mistrust—They don't know or trust you.
 - Unresponsiveness—They feel you ignored their concerns.



OUTRAGE FREE ZONE

- Anticipate and respond to complaints, concerns and information requests.
- Provide appropriate facts—don't bury with science.
- Don't discredit—no one likes being told they're wrong.
- Acknowledge problems and fix them.
- Go for the middle ground, between “perfectly safe” and “terribly dangerous.”



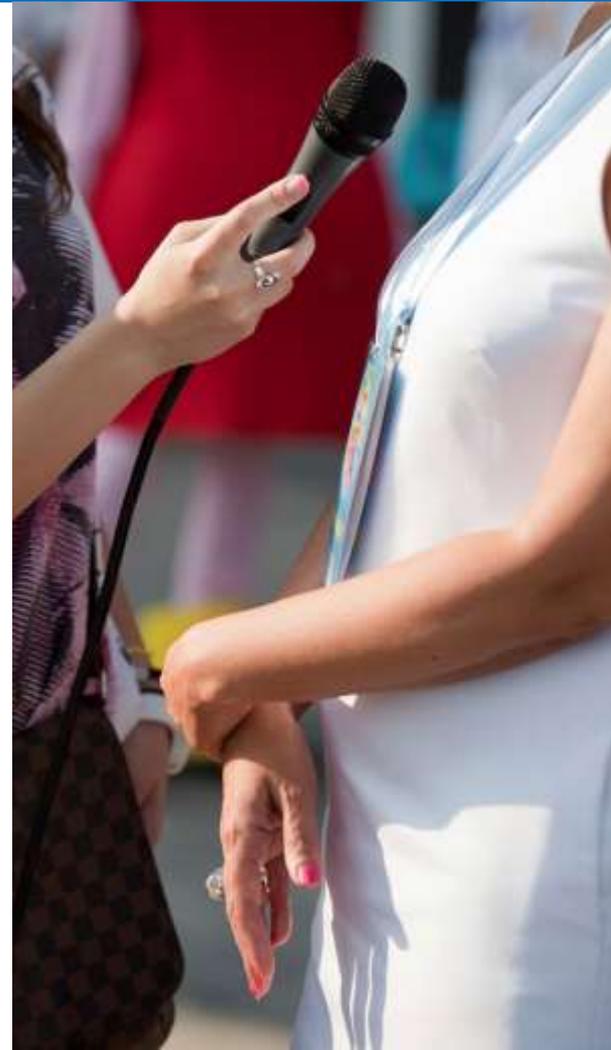
COMMON GROUND

- You probably can agree with the opposition:
 - Caution with food crops makes sense
 - Strict enforcement of regulations
 - Monitor and record land application
 - Thoroughly investigate suspected problems
 - Further study is needed
 - EPA updates to identify new chemicals of concern are prudent



GOOD INTERVIEW TIPS

- Provide the best spokesperson.
- Choose the length, time and location.
- Be prepared with key messages and answers to tough questions.
- Meet the reporter's deadline.
- Provide written information to reinforce messages.
- Practice, practice, practice.



TV OR RADIO TIPS

- Take the time to think before you speak
- Speak to the public, not the reporter
 - On camera, look at the reporter, say the words you want the public to hear
- Answer, then stop talking
- Restate key messages
- Answer in the positive
- Be aware of body language; no dark glasses



MANAGE THE MESSAGE

- Use “bridge” statements to go where you want to go
 - The important thing to focus on is...
 - What's key here is...
 - The real question is...
 - The point I'd like to emphasize is...
 - The fact is...



INTERVIEW DON'TS

- Don't fake it. If you don't know, say so.
- Avoid either/or, “what if” and third party questions
- Don't let the reporter put words in your mouth
- Don't accept as fact what the reporter says
- Never say “No Comment”
- No such thing as “Off the Record”



RESOURCES

- ❖ NBMA: nwbiosolids.org
- ❖ DEQ: deq.state.or.us/wq/biosolids/intro.htm
- ❖ EPA: <http://www2.epa.gov/biosolids>
- ❖ National Biosolids Partnership: <http://www.biosolids.org>
- ❖ Water Environment Research Foundation:
<http://www.werf.org/i/a/ka/Biosolids.aspx>
- ❖ ACWA Media Guide: <http://oracwa.org/r-com-biosolids.html>

