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Department of Environmental Protection
Policy Office
Rachel Carson State Office Building
P.O. Box 2063
Harrisburg, PA 17105-2063

**Re: Draft General Permits for the Beneficial Use of Exceptional Quality
Biosolids (PAG-07), Non-Exceptional Quality Biosolids (PAG-08) and
Residential Septage (PAG-09) by Land Application**

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

The Pennsylvania Municipal Authorities Association (“PMAA”) appreciates the opportunity to provide comments, through undersigned counsel, to the Department of Environmental Protection’s (“DEP”) announcement regarding the availability of Draft General Permits for the Beneficial Use of Exceptional Quality Biosolids (PAG-07), Non-Exceptional Quality Biosolids (PAG-08) and Residential Septage (PAG-09) by Land Application, which were posted by DEP on July 4, 2026. PMAA is an association that represents the interests of nearly 700 municipal authorities in Pennsylvania, which collectively provide water, sewer, stormwater, waste management and other services to over five million Pennsylvania citizens. Founded in 1941, the mission of PMAA is to assist authorities in providing services that protect and enhance the environment, promote economic vitality, and further the general welfare of the Commonwealth and its citizens. PMAA and its members, who are stewards of the environment, strive to provide the highest quality service to their customers and ratepayers. Many of PMAA’s members may be impacted by DEP’s ultimate decision on the Draft General Permits.

PMAA has consistently been at the forefront of educational initiatives and debate regarding the use of biosolids. It formed the PMAA Biosolids Workgroup to gather information and discuss the use of biosolids from a myriad of sources and stakeholders. PMAA was also a major participant in DEP’s Biosolids Workgroup, where it provided valuable feedback to DEP regarding the use of biosolids. In 2025, PMAA members adopted a resolution confirming that PMAA supports the land application of biosolids and the legislative and regulatory oversight, and approval, of revisions to general permits issued by DEP, consistent with the recommendations by a Legislative Budget and Finance Committee

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study authorized by House Resolution 149 (session of 2021). Moreover, in anticipation of its 84th Annual Conference in September, 2026, PMAA will propose another resolution for consideration by its members that will reinforce PMAA's support for the beneficial reuse, including land application, of biosolids and other biosolids management technologies when conducted in compliance with applicable federal and state requirements. The proposed resolution will also confirm PMAA's long-standing support for sound science in the development of government regulations and initiatives, by supporting the science regarding the use of biosolids that considers costs, benefits, feasibility, and impacts on municipal wastewater utilities and their ratepayers.

PMAA understands that some of its members have submitted or will be submitting comments to the Draft General Permits. Therefore, PMAA will not be submitting any technical comments to these Draft General Permits. However, PMAA strongly believes that any proposed changes to the Draft General Permits should be done so according to Pennsylvania's well-established regulatory review process. PMAA always supports the health and safety of Pennsylvania residents, and believes that such should be a paramount concern in any government initiative. Likewise, PMAA also believes in the consideration and application of sound science in any government initiative. Therefore, at a minimum, any proposed changes to the Draft General Permits should be subject to a technical evaluation, a cost-benefit analysis and an opportunity to be reviewed and commented upon by, among others, the Pennsylvania Independent Regulatory Review Commission. DEP has correctly emphasized the need for stakeholder involvement in the Draft General Permit process. PMAA agrees with DEP, but believes that such involvement can best be accomplished through the regulatory review process, which will ensure that the Draft General Permits are vetted through a transparent manner to ensure that they are protective of the public's health and safety, based on sound science, and in the public interest.

PMAA's comments herein are consistent with Pennsylvania legislative initiatives. House Resolution 149 (Session of 2021) directed the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee to study the costs and methods for permit holders to comply with proposed revisions to the General Permits and report its findings and conclusions to the House of Representatives. The Co-Sponsorship Memorandum for the aforementioned HR 149 (circulated by Representative Rigby) noted, in part, that the revisions to the General Permits "will significantly alter both the economic and environmental impacts of biosolids management across the Commonwealth," and that "[t]hese unfunded mandates will have a cascading impact, including increased costs to the permittee and ratepayer, with little or no discernible positive impact to the environment."

Following the report by the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee prepared at the direction of the legislature in the aforementioned HR 149, a second resolution was introduced in the House of Representatives (HR 257, Session of 2023). Therein, the resolution noted that the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee report shared "significant concerns related to implementation of the Department of Environmental Protection's proposed revisions and the increased cost to ratepayers, municipalities and the agricultural industry," and that "[t]he Department of Environmental Protection has not estimated the significant cost of permit holder compliance and the need for new municipal

infrastructure to comply with the proposed revisions.” HR 257 urged DEP not to implement the proposed revisions to the General Permits.

The Co-Sponsorship Memorandum to HR 257 (circulated by Representative Rigby) is also instructive, particularly as to the wastewater sector, which comprises a large component of PMAA’s membership. The Co-Sponsorship Memorandum noted that the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee’s report summarily stated that permit changes may create unintended consequences for biosolids management, which could result in higher fees for ratepayers. The Co-Sponsorship Memorandum then noted that certain costs related to the permit changes “will be passed along to local ratepayers in the form of increased fees,” which fees “will have a disproportionate impact on families that are least able to pay increased sewage rates.”

To reiterate, PMAA strongly believes in the health and safety of Pennsylvania residents and the protection of Pennsylvania’s environment and natural resources. It also believes that sound science must play a role in any government regulation or initiative. Significantly, these are not competing goals and objectives, but must be together addressed thoroughly in any regulation or initiative. Therefore, PMAA once again endorses the proper vetting of the General Permits at issue in this matter through Pennsylvania’s well-established regulatory review process.

Once again, PMAA is appreciative of the opportunity to provide the aforementioned comments and looks forward to working with DEP to address the issue of the Draft General Permits. Please contact the undersigned if you have any comments.

Very truly yours,

HAMBURG, RUBIN, MULLIN,
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By: _____

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