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Representative David Deen, Chair  
House Committee on Natural Resources, Fish & Wildlife  
Montpelier, VT 05633-5301

April 11, 2017

**Re. H.211**

Dear Chairman Deen and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on H. 211. This bill covers an unusual mix of topics, and NEBRA is only directly concerned with the final part related to biosolids, other residuals (sludges), and septage. On behalf of our members and other water quality professionals in Vermont, NEBRA urges this part be deleted or the entire bill be voted down.

Biosolids are the unavoidable, valuable by-products of wastewater treatment that have been treated and tested and can be beneficially used on soils. Wastewater treatment is society's primary defense of water quality. Sanitation has been the greatest medical advance in the past 150 years, according to a *BMJ* survey in 2007. We have to properly manage biosolids, and, most often, recycling to soils is *the best environmental option*.

Currently, the majority of biosolids produced in Vermont are recycled to soils after being treated at a facility in Chateaugay, NY. Other biosolids are land applied or composted from communities around the state. These programs are cost-effective and some have been around for decades. Significant local investments have been made to create these products, and farmers and other landowners rely on them for their benefits to soils and crops. This is a vital recycling process, keeping organic waste out of landfills where it creates methane, a powerful greenhouse gas.

Biosolids recycling to soils has been ongoing for decades, and there has been more than 45 years of dedicated research on the topic at academic institutions around the world. About 60% of the wastewater solids produced in the U. S. are recycled, including from Seattle, San Francisco, Denver, Chicago, Philadelphia, and Boston. Federal regulations – and stricter Vermont regulations – ensure protection of public health and the environment.

The recycling of biosolids, other residuals, and septage is important and effective recycling here and elsewhere. The provision in H.211 that would *require* DEC to develop a plan to phase out land application of these materials would be harmful to the environment and increase costs for municipalities across the state, leaving stranded, in some cases, large investments recently made for biosolids treatment. It makes no sense whatsoever. We urge the Committee to delete the biosolids and septage provisions of this bill or vote down this entire bill.

Thank you for your consideration,

Ned Beecher, Executive Director