Metropolitan Water Reclamation District *of* Greater Chicago

Press Release

Allison Fore
Public and Intergovernmental Affairs Officer
312.751.6626
allison.fore@mwrd.org
100 East Erie Street, Chicago, Illinois 60611

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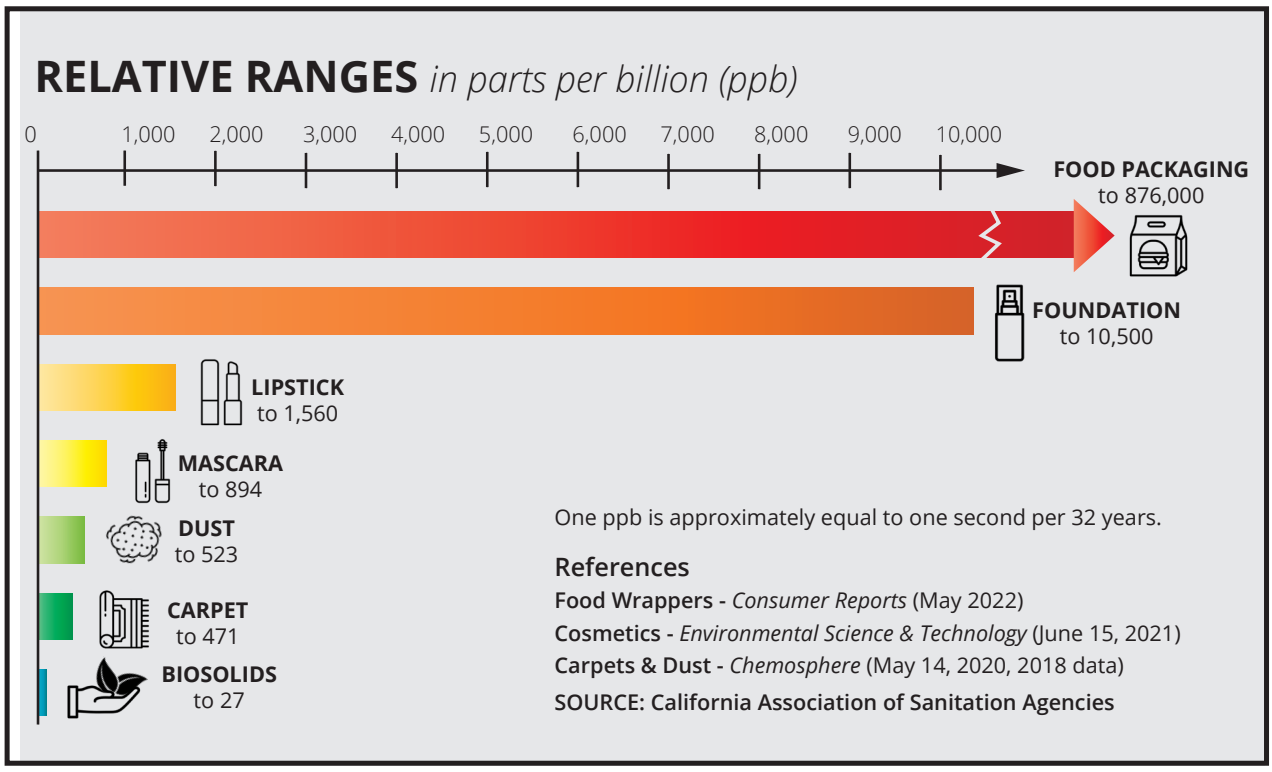
Biosolids are a valuable resource to recover

The Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) is extremely disappointed with two recent Tribune articles disparaging the MWRD's biosolids, a sustainable and beneficial byproduct of the water reclamation process. Specifically, the MWRD takes issue with articles published on July 31, 2022 and September 11, 2022. These articles, starting with inflammatory titles, include numerous inaccurate and misleading statements. The facts of the matter are that the MWRD follows all rules and regulations promulgated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) and Illinois EPA regarding the application and use of biosolids.

The articles inaccurately equate low levels of per- and polyfluoroalkyl (PFAS) in MWRD biosolids with toxic contamination. Tribune readers should be advised that these chemicals originate in consumer products such as food packaging and cosmetics, even lipstick (see chart). Research to date shows that land application of municipal biosolids like MWRD's does not pose a significant health risk. In fact, a U.S. Food and Drug Administration (U.S. FDA) study found no evidence of widespread PFAS occurrence in food grown or produced in areas with environmental PFAS.

Unduly sounding alarms, the articles leave readers completely in the dark about the benefits of biosolids. For decades, the U.S. EPA has promoted beneficial reuse of biosolids because biosolids provide nutrients and improve the physical characteristics of soil for growing plants.

Concerns about PFAS are understandable but certainly the focus should be on the source of PFAS and not the extremely low levels that are in a nutrient rich product such as biosolids. That is why MWRD is working to identify PFAS discharges to our collection system and urging regulators, the U.S. FDA and U.S. EPA, to use their tools to stop these chemicals at the source.



Recovering Resources, Transforming Water