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Interoffice Memorandum

TO: Commissioners

FROM: J.C. Langley  
Director, Production Department

DATE: July 11, 2019

SUBJECT: Resolution No. 2019-2214 – Emergency Declaration Due to Accumulation of Biosolids and Sewage Sludge Due to Excess Rain

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On February 6, 2019, the Commissioners approved an Emergency Declaration as noted above.

The justification for the Emergency Declaration was based on the need to take abnormal procurement actions to address the storage and disposal options for biosolids. Wet weather conditions and landfill restrictions severely impacted the normal land application, storage and disposal options in the entire mid-Atlantic region. This resulted in the exhaustion of biosolids storage capacity at approved storage facilities.

The same abnormal weather conditions remain today. In 2018, both the Washington D.C. and Baltimore areas set a record for the “wettest calendar year” since records began being kept in 1871. The rainfall totals in 2019 to date are on pace to set a new record. In addition, the biosolids storage capacity in the region has actually decreased, as a major vendor-owned storage facility has been unavailable to WSSC and other local utilities due to State-mandated inspection and repair.

To respond to this emergency situation, the Commission moved forward with a plan of action to construct temporary “biosolids staging areas” at four of our Water Resource Recovery Facilities. In February, the Commission negotiated a contract with an existing biosolids management vendor to design these staging areas. This design work was finalized in early May, and the proposed design was submitted to MDE for approval on May 30, 2019. MDE is still in the process of reviewing this submittal, and has just recently communicated the need for the Commission to submit various permit applications. As soon as MDE approval is obtained,

construction of the first biosolids staging area, to be located at the Western Branch WRRF, will begin. The construction time period at this facility will be six weeks.

For these reasons, the Emergency Declaration needs to remain in place. This will continue to allow the General Manager/CEO to mitigate the emergency conditions when necessary.