



Missouri House of Representatives

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
March 1, 2024

CONTACT: Rep. Ed Lewis
(573) 751-6566
Ed.Lewis@House.Mo.Gov

Rep. Dirk Deaton
573-751-9801
Dirk.Deaton@House.Mo.Gov

Regulating Industrial Wastewater: Missouri House Champions Environmental Responsibility

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. – The Missouri House has approved HBs 2134 & 1956 by a vote of 151-2, which is a comprehensive piece of environmental protection legislation aimed at regulating the land application of industrial wastewater, sludge, and related process wastes. The bill successfully passed the House with overwhelming support, underscoring a united and bipartisan commitment to safeguarding water resources and property rights in Missouri.

Sponsored by Representative Ed Lewis and Dirk Deaton, HBs 2134 & 1956 seeks to protect property rights and the water resources of the state from misapplication, over application, and improper storage of certain food industry wastes. This bipartisan initiative gained support from both rural and urban lawmakers as well as environmental and agricultural groups alike.

Under the legislation, waste disposal companies intending to construct storage lagoons for animal byproducts would be required to conduct monthly tests on waste for heavy metals and pathogens. Additionally, the bill mandates the installation of groundwater monitoring wells where needed to prevent any material seepage into water bodies. Notably, large animal feeding operations, and other agricultural operations are exempt from these provisions as there are already regulations and permitting requirements in place for those entities.

Originating from complaints in southwest and central Missouri, residents have expressed concerns about the odor and environmental hazards associated with the storage and spreading of waste material from meat processing and various other food related industries. The bill focuses on addressing the exploitation of a loophole by waste disposal companies, affecting both the environment and the agriculture industry, while emphasizing the need for a minimum regulatory framework and appropriate land application of certain materials.

“This legislation addresses a critical need to regulate the land application of industrial wastewater, sludge, and related process wastes. It is essential for ensuring the preservation of our rural farmland, safeguarding against the environmental impact of meatpacking waste, and fostering a sustainable balance between conservation, agriculture, and the meat processing industry,” Lewis, R-Moberly, said. “This is exactly the purpose of government: protecting people’s rights and finding solutions to their problems.”

“We’re really just clarifying that, fertilizer license or no fertilizer license, this material has to be subject to a DNR [Department of Natural Resources] permit, much like it is in virtually every other state in the union that would ensure that best practices are followed,” Deaton, R-Noel, said. “It is not our desire to take this completely out of the toolbox; some of these materials can be helpful and beneficial to our farmers, and we certainly don’t want to stand in the way of that. But what we don’t want to see is Missourians’ property rights being violated or abused as a result of over application events we have observed.”

The bill also introduces a nutrient management standard overseen by the Department of Natural Resources, emphasizing responsible waste management. It focuses on protecting hydrologically sensitive areas and grants the department enhanced monitoring capabilities. Moreover, it restricts the Clean Water Commission from exempting entities from water pollution permits unless engaged in product sales. The legislation also streamlines operating permit processes, ensuring compliance with construction standards for facilities.

"Missourians have a shared interest and commitment to good stewardship of its resources. I commend the efforts to protect our land and the property rights of farmers and ranchers from damages caused by unregulated land application of industrial wastewater, sludge, and related process wastes,” House Speaker Dean Plocher, R-Des Peres, said. “This legislation exemplifies the balance we aim to achieve as we work together in to finding solutions that strike a balance between protecting our natural resources and supporting economic growth.”

As the bill progresses to the next stage of legislative review, its positive reception in the House signals a promising step forward in fortifying Missouri's commitment to clean water and sustainable environmental practices while maintaining a balanced approach on conservation, agriculture, and business needs. The bill now moves to the Missouri Senate for consideration.

-###-