



Guidelines-Disposal Methods for Water Filter Backwash Solids

This fact sheet is intended to provide guidance for the proper disposal of water treatment backwash by-product.

Background

Water filter backwash (WFB) is generated when potable water treatment plants treat their well water to reduce suspended and dissolved solids.

Sand filter systems pump well water into the top of a tank that is pressurized or gravity fed down through a porous (usually sand-rock) media. Periodically the filter media is backwashed to remove the entrained solids.

Water filter backwash is conveyed to wastewater treatment facilities (WWTF) or is slurried to smaller settling tanks or ponds. To reduce wastewater treatment costs some municipalities' route the supernatant to settling facilities and the sludge to a WWTF, or the other way around. WFB routed to a settling facility need to be periodically cleaned out. The frequency will depend on the size of the tank or pond; and the volume and concentration of solids in the effluent.

Options for managing WFB include slurring the material to a WWTF, landfilling, using as non-residential construction fill, or land application. Before deciding to dispose of WFB at a WWTF, you should contact the WWTF to fully discuss this option including: (1) available capacity of the WWTF; and (2) potential need to submit a sanitary sewer extension (SSE) permit application.

As described in Minn. R. 7035.0300 subp. 100 water filter backwash solids (WFBS) are considered a solid waste. If the material is either landfilled or land applied, it must be tested and handled in accordance with this guidance document.

Options for WFB/WFBS disposal:

1. **Wastewater Treatment Facility**
2. **Landfill**
3. **Construction Fill**
4. **Land Application**

Steps for landfilling WFBS

1. The WFBS must pass the paint filter test (i.e. is a solid) to be accepted in a landfill.
2. Test and compare the material for the analytes and standards listed in the landfill's industrial solid waste management plan.
3. For unlined landfills radium 226 (Ra) concentrations cannot exceed 5 pCi/g. For lined landfills Ra concentrations cannot exceed 30 pCi/g. If radium in the WFBS exceeds 30 pCi/g options for its disposal must be arranged with the Minnesota Department of Health's Radiation Section.
4. If the test results are in alignment with the landfill's industrial solid waste management plan, the WFBS may be taken to a MPCA permitted landfill.

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WFB:

Water Filter Backwash consists of both a liquid supernatant that contains dissolved and suspended solids, and a more solid sludge that has precipitated out of solution.

WFBS:

Water Filter Backwash Solids. These are the solids present following the backwash of water treatment media. This is considered a solid waste.

Steps for using WFBS as construction fill

1. Test the material for the analytes listed in Table 1.
2. Using the analytical results, and formulas provided, determine whether the cumulative land applications limits listed in Table 1 are met.

If the results are below the limits in Table 1, the material may be used as fill for non-residential projects.

Steps for land applying WFB

1. Test the material for the analytes listed in Table 1.
2. Using the analytical results, and formulas provided, determine whether the cumulative land applications limits listed in Table 1 are met.
3. Determine the suitability of your site for land application using Tables 2-4.
4. Send in written notification to the county solid waste officer, and either the township clerk or city mayor, which ever is applicable, to provide local officials an opportunity to comment on the proposed application site.
5. Land apply the WFB in accordance with these guidelines.
6. Keep adequate records for future use.

Testing water filter backwash

Each time the WFB is to be land applied, a representative sample of the WFB must be collected in a way that provides a sample of the material which is actually land applied. For WFB this requires that an adequate number of subsamples be collected and composited into a single sample. The sample is then sent to a certified laboratory for testing. In addition to the parameters listed in Table 1, any chemical additives present in the WFB must also be analyzed. The results of these tests will be used to calculate the acceptable application rates for the by-product.

Table 1
Analytic parameters and cumulative limits for WFB

Parameter (Totals in mg/kg)	Cumulative Limits for land application
Radium 226	4.5 (milliCi/acre)
Arsenic	37 lb/acre
Barium	No Limit Established
Cadmium	No Limit Established
Copper	No Limit Established
Lead	No Limit Established
Manganese	No Limit Established
Mercury	No Limit Established
Molybdenum	No Limit Established
Nickel	No Limit Established
Selenium	No Limit Established
Zinc	No Limit Established
% percent solids	No Limit Established

If you have questions about what to test for, please contact the MPCA. If you have questions about sampling procedures, please contact your lab.

Formulas used to determine cumulative limits:

Maximum Application Rates Based on Radium and Arsenic:

$$\text{Max. application} = 37 \text{ lb/acre} \div (\text{arsenic conc.} \times 0.002)$$

Based on arsenic (mg/kg)

$$\text{Max. application} = 4.5 \text{ milliCi/ac} \div (\text{radium 226 conc.} \times 0.0009)$$

Based on radium 226 (pCi/g)

*** The maximum allowable WTB application is the lesser of the two results above minus any amount applied to the site from previous applications.**

$$\text{Actual Arsenic Loading rate (lbs/acre)} = \frac{\text{Arsenic Concentration (mg/kg)} \times \text{Actual application rate of solids (dry tons/acre)} \times 0.002}{1}$$

$$\text{Actual Ra-226 Loading rate (milliCi/acre)} = \frac{\text{Ra-226 Concentration (pCi/g)} \times \text{Actual application rate of solids (dry tons/acre)} \times 0.0009}{1}$$

$$\text{Solids Applied (dry tons/acre)} = \frac{\text{gal/acre} \times \% \text{ total solids}}{240}$$

Applied (as a decimal fraction)

$$\text{Solids Applied (dry tons/acre)} = \text{Wet tons/acre} \times \% \text{ total solids}$$

Applied (as a decimal fraction)

Site suitability criteria

All criteria in this section, including slope restrictions, site suitability criteria, and separation distances as provided in the following tables must be met for a site to be suitable for land application.

Table 2
Slope restrictions for application sites

Slope (percent)	Injection or Immediate Incorporation
0-12	Allowed
>12	Not Allowed

Table 3
Soil Suitability Criteria

Characteristic	Minimum Requirement ¹
Soil texture at the zone of by-product application	fine sand, loamy sand, sandy loam, loam, silt, silt loam, sandy clay loam, clay loam, sandy clay, silty clay loam, silty clay, or clay
Depth to bedrock	3 feet
Depth to seasonal high water table ²	3 feet

¹ This information can be determined by obtaining information from soil surveys published by the Natural Resources Conservation Service or by characterization of the site by a state of Minnesota licensed soil scientist or other qualified individual.

Site Selection and Use

It is recommended that a Type IV certified operator determine the suitability of each site for application and be responsible for properly land spreading the WFB. The site selection process should also include the following steps:

1. Determine that the soils located on the site meet all site suitability criteria;
2. If the site has received WTB in the past, determine the amount of pollutant that can be applied to the site. This is done by subtracting the cumulative amount of pollutant applied to the site from previous application from the cumulative pollutant limit in Table 1.

Provide written notification to the county solid waste officer, and either the township clerk or city mayor (depending on the location of the site). Notifications must include a description of the WFB, and how the WFB will be land applied including any staging or storage that will occur prior to land application.

Miscellaneous management practices/restrictions

1. WFB must be incorporated or injected within 48 hours;
2. Application of WFB is not allowed on areas of a site ponded with water or liquid;
3. No runoff of the WFB from the application site is allowed;
4. No significant surface ponding of liquid WFB is allowed after 6 hours of the application;
5. All WFB which are land applied must be uniformly distributed over the area of the site used during application; and
6. Wind-blown WFB is not allowed.

Record keeping requirements

1. A map which identifies the exact site location and year of application;
2. Testing results and application rates;
3. The crop of vegetation grown on the site;
4. Daily hauling records which indicate quantities transferred to storage or land applied with the storage or site location identified;
5. The cumulative quantity of pollutant applied to the site from all applications of WTB;
6. A cumulative total of the quantity of material applied on each site for the cropping year;
7. A copy of written information provided to each end user of the WFB, this includes any test results;
8. A copy of notification letters submitted to each city, county, and township.

Table 4
Minimum separation distances from land application sites

Feature	Incorporated or Injected With 48 Hours	
Private drinking water supply wells	200 ft.	
Public drinking water supply Wells	1000 ft.	
Lakes, rivers, streams, ditches, wetlands, intermittent streams, or tile inlets connected to these surface water features ¹	slope 0%-6%	50 ft.
	slope 6%-12%	100 ft
Grassed Water Ways ²	33 ft.	

¹ Intermittent stream means a drainage channel with definable banks that provides for runoff flow to any of the surface waters listed in the above table during snow melt or rainfall events.

² Grassed waterways are natural or constructed and seeded to grass as protection against erosion. Separation distances are from the centerline of grassed waterways. For a grassed waterway which is wider than the separation distances required, application is allowed to the edge of the grass strip.

Annual report

An annual report is only required for those facilities with a surface or subsurface discharge permitted by the MPCA.

A report of all water filter backwash solids disposal activities for the past cropping year must be submitted by December 31 of each year on the Annual Report Form. An electronic version of this form is available at the following address: <http://www.pca.state.mn.us>. The annual report must include the following information:

1. Method of disposal;
2. Total quantity disposed; and
3. Location of disposal; and
4. Analytical results.
5. Cumulative amount of arsenic and Radium-226 pollutant applied to the application site.

For assistance you may contact

For further assistance, contact the MPCA Customer Assistance Center at 651-297-2274, or 800-646-6247.

Terms/Definitions

Cropping Year means a year beginning on September 1 of the year prior to the growing season and ending August 31 the year the crop is harvested. For example, the 1994 cropping year began September 1, 1993 and ended August 31, 1994.

End User means the person that has accepted the IBP for their use as a soil amendment.

Immediately Incorporated means incorporated into the soil with tillage within 48 hours after surface application of an IBP.

Industrial By-product (IBP) has the same meaning as “solid waste” given in Minnesota Rules part 703 5.0300.

Type IV Certified Operator or Inspector means a person certified according to Minnesota Rules chapter 7048 for land application.

Wetlands generally include swamps, marshes, bogs, and similar areas. Wetlands must have the following attributes: (1) a predominance of hydric soils; (2) inundated or saturated by surface water or groundwater at a frequency and duration sufficient to support a prevalence of hydrophytic vegetation typically adapted for life in a saturated soil condition; and (3) under normal circumstances support a prevalence of such vegetation.