

BIOSOLIDS DIGEST

PUBLISHED BY THE WESTERN LAKE SUPERIOR SANITARY DISTRICT



WLSSD's Land Application Team (left to right): Dave Reuer, Evan Hawbaker, Kevin Shea, Todd MacMillan (retired November 18, 2022), and Paul Wilken. Not pictured: Marc Curran and Darren Turnboom.

Thank you, Todd MacMillan, for 34 years of service to WLSSD!

Todd MacMillan retired on November 18th, 2022 following 34 years of service to WLSSD. Todd started as an intern in 1984, followed by a stint as a temporary utility operator, until he came on board full-time in 1989. Todd was with the Biosolids Program for 15 years, working his way from operator to lead operator to supervisor—a role he held for 12 years. But as Todd will tell you, his experiences with farming began long before his career at WLSSD...

Todd was born and raised on a farm. He has fond memories of helping his grandpa, who was a farmer and cattle dealer/hauler. "I spent time helping him when I was a teenager, and I knew most of our biosolids customers before I was 18 years old!", Todd recalled. "I really miss riding and racing horses on the farm!"

When asked what he'll do in retirement, Todd had a long list! He plans to travel, including trips to Ireland and Scotland; out west to see the redwoods and sequoias; and riding horses in the Lamar Valley in Yellowstone. At home, he looks forward to keeping busy with beekeeping, and tending to his raspberry patch and orchard.

Todd's dedication to the the Biosolids Program has been invaluable to the District. Todd, we wish you many years of adventures ahead. We know you'll continue to "bee" curious and keep learning!

NEW THIS DIGEST



This issue of the Digest is dedicated to the hardworking Land Application Team at WLSSD.

The next time you see a team member on a farm field near you, please share your gratitude for the work they do to create a high quality biosolids product and for excellent delivery and application services!

**Congratulations to
Erik Johnson!**

**Erik is the newly hired
Environmental Program
Coordinator who will start
working with our Biosolids
Program in March!**



program and takes an interest in their farming methods and lifestyle, it is not unusual for Paul to be invited to a farmer's home for coffee and conversation.

Paul takes pride in his work and seeks out challenges and new solutions. "As a Treatment Plant Operator, I diagnosed and came up with a solution for a couple of different problems that led to my then supervisor saying to me, 'You're going to really like hearing the words I'm about to say—You were right.'" The Biosolids Program is in good hands; Paul will approach the occasional obstacle—not as a problem, but as a challenge with an undiscovered solution.

Paul recalled his favorite memory of working at WLSSD as the Biosolids Lead Operator, "the first one that comes to mind is the day we set the record for the most loads spread in one day—17. It was September of 2020, and we were short-handed due to an employee's illness. It was that time of year—if the weather turned on us, we would be done for the next month. At the start of our day, I told them to bring as many loads as they could, and I'd stay as long as it took to get them spread. The entire crew was immediately on board with the idea, and everybody seemed to have a little spring in them that day." I think you can catch the drift—Paul is a hard worker!

Paul plays as hard as he works! For example, Paul has climbed 49 of the highest peaks in the contiguous United States. His hobbies include running, hiking, climbing, biking, skiing, construction projects, and fishing.

The next time you see Paul, be sure to congratulate him on his well-deserved promotion! I bet he'd even join you for a cup of coffee or two.

Paul Wilken Promoted to Supervisor of Clean Water and Reuse

Paul is undoubtedly a familiar and friendly face to all of our farmers. He has been the primary contact for farmers enrolled in the Biosolids Program for 12 years. Paul is hanging up his Lead Operator hat to take on the supervisory role of the Biosolids Program and conveyance portions of our wastewater treatment process, with a new title, Supervisor of Clean Water and Reuse. Paul's extensive experience in wastewater treatment and biosolids application makes him a perfect fit for this role.



"When I came to WLSSD as a wastewater operator, I didn't know what biosolids were due to the fact that we dewatered and burned the wastewater sludge at my previous plant. When I first heard about this product, I quickly came to the conclusion that land application is the best option. A few years later, I entered this department and came to find that the majority of our farmers own small, family farms that have thin margins; using biosolids helps them keep their operations a little more viable". Because Paul strives to learn about the farmers in our



Paul leads a team of five staff who deliver Field Green® to farms and minelands in Northern Minnesota and Wisconsin. They expertly apply biosolids at the appropriate agronomic rate on fields using GPS technology and manure spreading equipment. We'd like to introduce the team! Each employee responded to a few interview questions, and Paul added some comments about each of his colleagues.

Introducing the Land Application Operators

Dave Reuer (pictured on front page)

You can recognize Dave out on the fields because he is tall. REALLY TALL. Paul will tell you he likes to work alongside Dave on hot days so he has some shade! Paul has worked with Dave for 12 years and said this about Dave, "He's naturally inclined to be a team player. The number of times he's gone above and beyond is innumerable."

Dave has been with WLSSD for 16 years. During that time he has most appreciated working with WLSSD's customers and seeing them improve their yield with biosolids. Dave knows a little something about the importance of yields, having grown up on a farm in Bemidji. Dave's most "interesting" moment on the job was burying the tractor in a drain field on a farm in Wright, Minnesota—and the work involved in getting it unstuck!



Maneuvering heavy equipment on fields can be difficult!



Marc Curran

Marc has been with the Land Application Program for 9 years. He enjoys working with his colleagues and solving daily challenges. You'll see Marc on the fields in the spreader carefully applying biosolids. Off of the field, you'll find him working on home projects and enjoying the outdoors.

Paul has worked with Marc for all 9 of those years and says that you'd have to dig deep to find a more energetic person! Paul also mentioned that Marc is quite the mechanic, "having him on the crew has helped us get through many a breakdown that could have left us in a bad place."

Kevin Shea (pictured on front page)

Congratulations to Kevin Shea! Kevin was just promoted to Lead Biosolids Operator! Kevin has been at WLSSD for 2 years hauling biosolids to farms and minelands. Kevin is impressed with the work at the mines and amazed with the size of the equipment they use.

It may be Kevin's childhood summers spent at his aunt and uncle's farm in southern Minnesota that provided an easy transition to WLSSD's Land Application Program. That, and his love for pretty much anything outdoors, including fishing and snowmobiling.

"It didn't take long to notice that he's a great mix of common sense, intelligence, and calm," according to Paul. Kevin is known as the computer wiz amongst his colleagues at WLSSD.

Darren Turnboom

Darren started at WLSSD in 2021. When asked what he likes about his job he said, "I enjoy running the equipment and talking with the farmers and landowners where we are spreading biosolids. I have met some interesting people through my job."



Darren also has experience with farming. Darren's dad had 20 to 30 sow pigs. They raised and sold feeder pigs. When Darren turned sixteen, he started working on his uncle's dairy farm. For four years, Darren milked 60-70 Holsteins. Paul mentioned that Darren has the heart of a farm boy, making him an easy fit for the team.

Darren enjoys being outside and appreciates that about his job. Outside of work, you'll find him hunting, fishing, camping, and gardening.

Evan Hawbaker (pictured on front page)

Having been at WLSSD for about 6 months now, Evan brings with him years of experience driving trucks, including hauling sugar beet, corn, and soy harvest in North Dakota. Evan enjoys driving through rural areas and operating on farm fields. He appreciates the challenge of encountering tricky situations and finding the best way through! Paul noted that Evan quickly found his place on the team and is a go-getter when it comes to training and learning new things.

Evan will tell you he is still learning the ropes about wastewater treatment. He is impressed with seeing all the steps that go into cleaning wastewater before it flows into the St. Louis River.

Evan has a wide range of hobbies to include beekeeping, sailing on Lake Superior, and camping.



Field Green® Program
Western Lake Superior Sanitary District
2626 Courtland Street
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Clear Answers for Clean Water™

Contact us

Schedule a field or ask questions about a recent application:

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Kevin.Shea@wlssd.com

For general questions:

Paul Wilken, Supervisor of Clean Water and Reuse

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processed chlorine-free and acid-free

Field Green® Fee Schedule

A nominal fee is charged for land application of biosolids. If the farmer would like the biosolids tilled into the soil, there is an additional fee. A delivery fee is applied for distances greater than 40 miles from WLSSD's treatment plant.

SERVICE	RATE
First 300 tons/year	\$19/acre
300-900 tons/year	\$17/acre
900+ tons/year	\$15/acre
Primary Tillage	\$12/acre

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