



Florida Department of Environmental Protection

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2600 Blair Stone Road
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-2400

Rick Scott
Governor

Carlos Lopez-Cantera
Lt. Governor

Jonathan P. Steverson
Secretary

January 8, 2016

Ms. Ann Shortelle
Executive Director
St. Johns River Water Management District
District Headquarters
4049 Reid Street/State Road 100 West
Palatka, FL 32177
ashortelle@sjrwmd.com

Re: Emeraldal Marsh Conservation Area Management Plan in Lake County, Florida -
Sun Gro Horticulture Processing, Inc. Soil Gathering Project

Dear Executive Director Shortelle:

Sun Gro Horticulture Processing, Inc. ("Sun Gro") has contacted the Department and requested we issue correspondence to the St. Johns River Water Management District ("SJRWMD") in connection with the proposed peat-gathering project on approximately 1,320 acres of the Emeraldal Marsh Conservation Area in Lake County, Florida.

The Department has reviewed the Report of Soil Sampling and Analysis prepared by Creative Environmental Solutions, Inc. ("CES") dated May 11, 2015, where low levels of two residual organochlorine pesticides, toxaphene and dieldrin, were detected in the surface layer of the peat on the Emeraldal Marsh property. These pesticides were reportedly applied to the Emeraldal Marsh property during historical agricultural operations.

A previous 2001 study found concentrations of these pesticides exceeding the FDEP default Soil Cleanup Target Levels (SCTLs). Toxaphene levels in the 2015 samples from the peat gathering area were all below default SCTLs and appear to have substantially biodegraded naturally to insignificant levels. Dieldrin levels exceeded default SCTLs in several samples but are confined to the top one-foot of the peat.

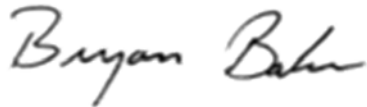
Note that peat is not soil and the comparison to SCTLs is strictly for reference purposes. Peat has a higher organic content than natural soil, and would generally act to absorb pesticides. This appears to have occurred since detections are restricted to the top few inches of the samples.

From a regulatory perspective, the top one-foot of peat is reportedly to be mixed with underlying peat during the peat gathering restoration activities to make a safe product and be re-used. Therefore the material is not a waste under the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (which addresses both hazardous and solid waste) or Department rules. The proposed use of peat in this manner is not in violation of Department rules or standards.

However, if the District decides to dispose of the peat, either off-site or via encapsulation as per the alternative in the 2015 report, the peat would then become a solid waste and normal characterization to determine if it is hazardous would need to occur (an unlikely scenario based on the presented data).

If you should have any questions, please contact me at 850-245-8787 or via email at bryan.baker@dep.state.fl.us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bryan Baker".

Bryan Baker, P.G.
Administrator
Hazardous Waste Program and Permitting

BB/bb

cc: Ron H. Noble, Esquire