

May 14, 2025

Dear Albemarle County Supervisors and Scottsville Town Council,

The Totier Creek Watershed Association is a recently formed grassroots organization of farmers, land stewards, and rural folks concerned about industrial activities in our watershed. We are focused on reducing and preventing stream pollution, groundwater contamination, and harmful practices that diminish the quality of life in our community.

One of our main concerns is the ongoing use of sewage sludge, also known as “biosolids,” as fertilizer within the Totier Creek Watershed. Compared to other parts of Albemarle County, **sewage sludge is disproportionately spread in Southern Albemarle, and in the Totier Creek Watershed in particular (see attached map)**. Scientists have documented the presence of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (“PFAS” or so-called “forever chemicals”), microplastics, and other contaminants in biosolids, which can accumulate in the soil and in animal tissue, run off into streams and groundwater, and become airborne,¹ after biosolids are used a fertilizer.

Due to mounting concerns over widespread sludge-related pollution, Maine has banned the use of biosolids as fertilizer,² Texas farmers are suing the biosolids company Synagro for PFAS contamination of farmland,³ and South Carolina is seeking a federal Superfund designation for sludge-applied farmland.⁴

Closer to home, the Maryland Department of the Environment temporarily suspended the issuance of new biosolids land application permits due to concerns of PFAS contamination. Meanwhile, Synagro is exporting biosolids from Maryland sources known to produce PFAS-contaminated sludge⁵ as it works to expand its market in Virginia, including in Albemarle County.

Synagro is currently seeking a permit renewal to spread sewage sludge across 5,770 acres in Albemarle County, of which 1,649 are new acres.⁶ Much of that total acreage falls within Scottsville’s Drinking Water Supply Protection Area.

The Totier Creek Watershed Association strongly opposes the use of sewage sludge as fertilizer in Southern Albemarle and within the Totier Creek Watershed. We strongly oppose the importation of PFAS-contaminated sewage sludge from Maryland and the District of Columbia into Virginia. We support mandatory PFAS-testing of sewage sludge before it is applied on Albemarle County farms or timberland.

We support the adoption of a biosolids ordinance in Albemarle County, as at least 18 other Virginia counties already have done. We support an ordinance that requires testing and monitoring of sludge before it is land-applied.

We support including language in the County’s and the Town’s Comprehensive Plans that recognizes the dangers that biosolids and PFAS pose to human health, wildlife, and the environment, and that recommends the adoption of a biosolids ordinance.

We commend the Albemarle County Board of Supervisors for expressing support, in its 2025 Legislative Positions and Policy Statements, for state legislation to enhance local governments' regulatory authority over the land application of biosolids. We urge the Board of Supervisors to prioritize this issue in 2026.

We are grateful that our local water utility has taken steps to test and treat for PFAS in Scottsville's public drinking water. However, better controls on the land application of biosolids upstream will reduce treatment costs borne by ratepayers.

We implore the Albemarle County Board of Supervisors and Scottsville Town Council to stay informed of Synagro's pending permit application and to submit comments on the application to the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, especially to request site-specific permit conditions to protect our community from the risks of PFAS and other contaminants in biosolids.

Please use your voice to protect our water quality and keep the soil of Albemarle County healthy and suitable for cultivation for generations to come.

Totier Creek Watershed Association

¹ American Chemical Society, "Microplastics from natural fertilizers are blowing in the wind more often than once thought" (Jan. 17, 2024), <https://www.acs.org/pressroom/presspacs/2024/january/microplastics-from-natural-fertilizers-are-blowing-in-the-wind.html>.

² Maine Revised Statutes, section 1306, subsection 7.

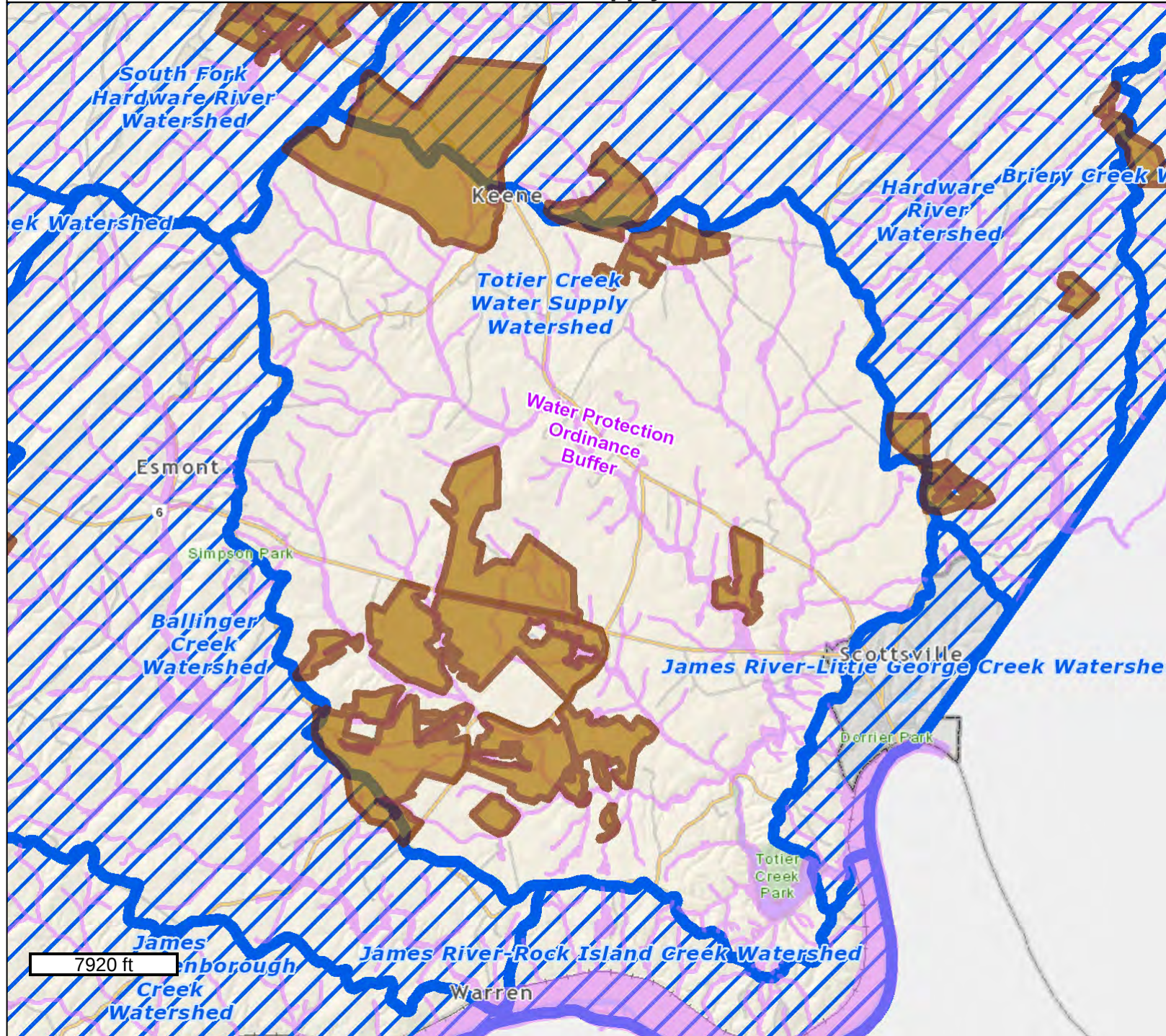
³ Brigit Rollins, "Farmers File Suit Over PFAS Contamination," *The National Agricultural Law Center* (Apr. 2, 2024), <https://nationalaglawcenter.org/farmers-file-suit-over-pfas-contamination/>.

⁴ Hiroko Tabuchi, "Sludge Contaminated 10,000 Acres of Farmland. What Should Be Done?," *New York Times* (April 21, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/04/21/climate/sludge-fertilizer-farmland-superfund.html>.

⁵ Hiroko Tabuchi, "Sewage Sludge Fertilizer From Maryland? Virginians Say No Thanks.," *New York Times* (May 8, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/05/08/climate/sewage-sludge-fertilizer-virginia-maryland-pfas-forever-chemicals.html>.

⁶ To view the permit application, please see <https://www.dontspreadonme.org/sludge-permit-vpa01587>.

Totier Creek Water Supply Protection Area - Biosolids Permits



Legend

(Note: Some items on map may not appear in legend)

Overlays

Biosolids

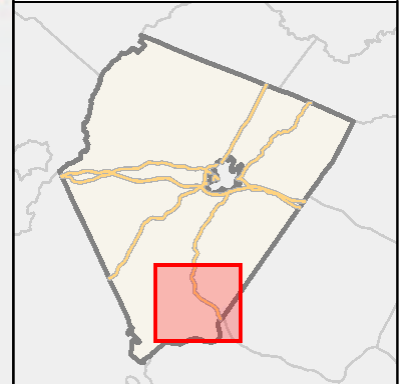
Water Protection Ordinance Buffers

Water Features

Watersheds

N

Y



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