

# Open Burning Program Guidance Harvesting And Burning Phragmites Reeds from Municipal Sewage Sludge Reed Drying Beds



Waste & Materials Management  
P.O. Box 7921  
Madison, WI 53707-7921

Pub. - WA 1014-2003

**Assigned staff:** Kevin Kessler

**Background:** Some municipal sewage sludge drying beds are designed with Phragmites reeds as a means of drying the sludge. The reeds that are sold and used in this type of reed bed drying beds are non-native species where there are concerns that they not be allowed to spread as an invasive species beyond the intended location. There is a need to annually harvest the reeds to promote plant growth within the bed. This guidance covers approved methods for burning the reeds.

**Applicable Regulatory Programs:** The reed beds are approved by the Watershed Management program and their operation is covered by the WPDES permit for those municipalities. Burning the harvested reeds is covered by Air Management's rules in s. NR 429.04. The harvested reeds are legally defined as "solid waste" and the management of the solid waste (whether burned, landfilled or composted) is regulated by the solid waste laws and rules.

**Burning:** Burning of the dried reed material in accordance with "methods approved by the department" is allowed by rule under s. NR 429.04(1)(i) and NR 502.11(2)(f). The following guidance covers the approved methods.

## **Guidance:**

1. Reeds must be harvested and burned on the same property or burned in place on the reed drying bed (depending upon the design and materials used for the underdrain system.)
2. Reeds must be left standing into the winter months until they have achieved the lowest moisture content practicable to allow for the most efficient burning.
3. Reeds should be burned as soon as they are harvested unless they are covered with an impervious cover material. They should not be cut and stacked in a manner where precipitation can cause the material to become wet.
4. No plastic material or solid waste material other than the reeds may be burned.
5. Burning must be conducted in a safe nuisance-free manner when wind and weather conditions minimize adverse effects. Wind and weather conditions should assure that nearby residences will not be affected.
6. Burning must be conducted in a manner that prevents wild fires and in conformance with all state and local fire protection regulations. It is recommended that burning occur when there is adequate snow cover. State and local burning permits should be obtained where applicable.

**Contact 608/266-2111 or [DNRWasteMaterials@Wisconsin.gov](mailto:DNRWasteMaterials@Wisconsin.gov) for further information.**

**Disclaimers:** This document is intended solely as guidance and does not include any mandatory requirements except where requirements found in statute or administrative rule are referenced. This guidance does not establish or affect legal rights or obligations and is not finally determinative of any of the issues addressed. This guidance does not create any rights enforceable by any party in litigation with the State of Wisconsin or the Department of Natural Resources. Any regulatory decisions made by the Department of Natural Resources in any manner addressed by this guidance will be made by applying the governing statutes and administrative rules to the relevant facts. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources provides equal opportunity in its employment, programs, services and functions under an Affirmative Action Plan. If you have any questions, please write to Equal Opportunity Office, Department of Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240. This publication is available in alternative format (large print, Braille, audio tape, etc.) upon request. Please call 608/266-2111 for more information.

Open Burning Program Guidance Harvesting and Burning Phragmites Reeds from Municipal Sewage Sludge Reed Drying Beds