



## **Onsite Sanitary Sewage Facilities Workgroup**

**Tuesday, November 3, 2009**

**1:30 PM to 3:30 PM**

### **Individuals Present:**

BIG Liaison – Alisa Max (Harris County), Tony Lofton (Pro Flo), Garry Gana (Fort Bend County), Louis Vaja (On-site Sewage Facilities), Jeff Mayhew (SJRA-BGE), Ruben Gonzales (Matagorda County), Rex Tunze (Chambers County), Bryan Eastham (TCEQ), D. Ray Young (Water Engineers), Marilyn K. Harrison (City of Beach City), Margaret Gainer (City of Beach City), Mary Purzer (AECOM), Frank Green (Montgomery County), Jack Northey (TCEQ), Margaret Hines Dorman (Citizen), Melissa Hamous (HCPID), Kim Laird (TCEQ), Pete Gutierrez on phone (Village of Surfside Beach), Anju Chalise on phone (TCEQ), Karen Carroll on phone (Brazoria County), Dina Catalan on phone (Brazoria County)

### **H-GAC Staff Present:**

Rachel Powers, Erin Livingston, Om Chawla

### **Discussion:**

Rachel began the discussion by reviewing the workgroups progress to date and the BIG's priorities. OSSFs were identified, by the BIG, as a significant source of E. coli.

### ***GIS mapping project***

H-GAC received American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds and as a result was able to begin work on one of the implementation activities (IAs) from the OSSF workgroup, mapping of known OSSF locations. The next step will be to identify additional OSSF locations.

As part of the mapping efforts Rachel has been contacting authorized agents. Currently there is a wide range of methods used for data storage, SAFE program being one of them, and of the information being collected. Rules require a minimum of information that must be collected by authorized agents, but many collect information beyond the minimum. Some collect GPS information and others expressed interest in collecting it. Maybe there is a source of funding to get GPS units for the authorized agents. This would greatly assist in any mapping efforts. Alternatively, maintenance providers could GPS the OSSF locations.

Q: How exact does GPS need to be?

A: It is recommended that GPS coordinates be taken as close as possible to the OSSF.

Maps could be used for:

- Maintenance tracking
- Maintaining location information
- Identifying growth clusters
- Determining the number of systems added in an area each year
- Inspection and maintenance scheduling
- Helping new staff learn the locations of systems
- Developing a unified plan with the wastewater treatment facilities with the knowledge of failing systems' locations
- Determining bacteria sources for impaired waterways
- Determining where to sewer next

H-GAC has been trying to locate the unpermitted facilities. Difficulties in locating OSSFs stem from the fact that MUDs don't always provide sewer service throughout their district and that service area maps are not always accurate. Methods that could be used to locate septic systems would be to gather information on the locations of private wells or to obtain information on OSSFs from census information, including GPS data that will be collected.

Methods used to ensure OSSFs are installed include withholding electric hook-up or withholding building permits. One county has found that education regarding OSSFs can be disseminated to property owners at the time of purchase through real estate agents. This method has been effective and results in property owners asking questions and becoming educated about their system.

When asked how it would be easiest for H-GAC to get updated OSSF information regularly from authorized agents those present decided it should be sent to H-GAC on a monthly basis to coincide with submittal of the same information to TCEQ. Rachel will send out a list of the information H-GAC will be wanting and stated that H-GAC will work with those that don't have the information available electronically.

Information collected by H-GAC will be made available to all.

### ***Homeowner maintenance/OSSF management programs***

In other regions of the country annual permit renewal fees are used to fund OSSF programs. General consensus did not support the development of this requirement for our region with concerns voiced including: all costs would be passed on to the homeowner and writing that many receipts would be time consuming.

Public education on the other hand was viewed positively. A regional website with information on OSSFs would be helpful. Local entities could provide a link to the regional site from their website. It was

suggested that H-GAC be the keeper of this website. Other possible avenues for disseminating information include schools, newspapers, mailer, and real estate agents.

Q: Is there an online program for homeowners to learn about OSSF maintenance?

A: Harris County will look into it. Not many people want to do that much education. Those who install the system are supposed to educate the homeowners but this doesn't happen all the time.

Different areas will require different solutions. Additional ideas included pushing water conservation in low income areas and a grant program to replace OSSFs where appropriate.

### ***Funding sources***

Possible funding sources include:

- Small flows clearinghouse
- USDA
- TWDB: EDAP
- Supplemental Environmental Projects
- Community Development Block Grants
- Public utility funds
- Local extension office
- Texas On-Site Research Council
- 319 funds for nonpoint-source pollution

Q: Can H-GAC administer the funds? It might help make the bids more competitive and have other benefits.

A: This is one of the things H-GAC does well.

### **Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 3:30 PM.