



**Onsite Sewage Facilities (OSSF) Workgroup
DRAFT Meeting Notes
November 14, 2012
1:00 to 4:00 PM
H-GAC Conference Room C, Second Floor**

Attendees

Alfonso Acosta (Austin County), Raymond Beckford (Harris County), John Blount (Harris County), Roy Elizondo (Montgomery County), Ryan Gerlich (Texas AgriLife Extension), Frank Green (Montgomery County), Wesley Adam Grier (Harris County), Andrew Isbell (Walker County), Larry Johnson (Harris County), Jeremiah Kilgore (Harris County), Robert Knight (Walker County), Alisa Max (Harris County), Rayfield May Sr. (Harris County), Will Merrell (H-GAC), Jack Northey (TCEQ), Nwachukwu Sam Okonkwo (TCEQ), Rachel Powers (H-GAC), Winford Roberts (Waller County), James Walls (Harris County), Tyrone West (Harris County)

Call to Order/Welcome/Introductions

Rachel Powers called the meeting to order, initiated self-introductions, and reviewed the agenda.

Presentation: Walker County Authorized Agent Program for OSSF – Andrew Isbell

The focus of Mr. Isbell's presentation was OSSF maintenance, compliance, and the development of a mechanism to support the program's administration. Onsite systems with secondary treatment (aerobic) require a maintenance contract with a maintenance provider. Although the term "maintenance" is used, the primary function of the contract is for the provider to inspect the system every four months and identify problems.

The relationship between Walker County, the service provider, and the customer is set up similarly to the state vehicle inspection system. The state and county require that systems be inspected. However, instead of the state or county directly inspecting each system, the law allows for third party vendors to conduct inspections. Customers pay the third party vendors directly and the maintenance provider submits reports to the customer (homeowner) and the county. The county ensures that the maintenance providers are not submitting falsified reports by auditing and re-inspecting a certain number of systems each year.

Walker County felt that there was an undue monetary burden in administrative resources by reviewing each submitted maintenance report. In order to pay for the administrative costs, Walker County developed an administrative fee mechanism. A

maintenance provider is charged a \$5 filing fee with each report. If a report is late, a \$2 fine is charged for each business day with a cap at \$100.

Since the plan has been implemented, the County has sufficient funds to administer the program and identify problems, residents can have more confidence that they are paying for actual service, and the maintenance providers who cannot or will not comply with requirements must come into compliance. As a result, there is much greater compliance with regulations.

Presentation: Harris County Authorized Agent Program for OSSF – John Blount, P.E.

The focus of Mr. Blount's presentation was to illustrate the more stringent rules that have been included in Harris County's OSSF Order specifically to protect water quality. Harris County first started permitting OSSF in 1973 for facilities within floodplains. Its first OSSF rules are from 1978. In the 1990s, the County started requiring secondary treatment. The Harris County Order has sixty-one amendments, seventeen of which are related to water quality. He stated that in Harris County:

- The OSSF must pass inspection before electrical service will be authorized at a new building.
- Gray water, other than gray water from a washing machine, must be disinfected to the same standard as secondary effluent.
- Systems installed within 1000 ft of Lake Houston must also have secondary treatment and also must incorporate nutrient reduction BMPs (best management practices).
- Harris County requires that calculations for hydraulic loading rate, wastewater strength, and dosing calculations must be included with the submission of planning materials.
- All aerobic plants for residences must be designed with the assumption that the organic load is one hundred and fifty GDP (gallons per day) per bedroom.
- Homeowners who want to maintain their aerobic treatment unit must have a Class D Wastewater License and must submit the same reports as maintenance providers
- OSSFs within watersheds where one or more stream segments are listed as impaired for bacteria on the EPA 303(d) List will have electronic monitoring, secondary treatment meeting NSF 40 standards, and pump tanks must be installed with scouring equipment.
- Compliance history can be used to deny a permit.

Mapping Project and FlexMap Application Introduction and Demonstration

Because of the provision of data to H-GAC by authorized agents is critical to the mapping project, Rachel and Will began the mapping project by giving out certificates of appreciation with gold stars to the AAs who have been providing data.

The following AAs were recognized with a gold star for recently providing OSSF data:

- Galveston County
- Liberty County
- Wharton County

Furthermore, the following AAs were recognized with two gold stars for having provided a complete set of OSSF permit records:

- Austin County
- Brazoria County
- City of Manvel
- Chambers County
- Fort Bend County
- Harris County
- Matagorda County
- Montgomery County
- Waller County

H-GAC staff member William Bass introduced and demonstrated the updated OSSF Permit Application. This application is a web based map that allows designated representatives and the public to view OSSF permit data and to conduct basic analyses.

The OSSF mapping application is available at www.h-gac.com/go/spetic. Highlights of the application include the following:

- OSSF layers that show permitted OSSFs by age, by Authorized Agent, and number of OSSF per square mile.
- A layer showing the results of an analysis to determine residential properties with a higher chance of having an old or otherwise unpermitted system.

Future efforts will focus on collecting and mapping complaint data and setting priorities for education, repair, and replacement.

Local Water Quality Projects

Rachel and Will briefly described how OSSF mapping data were being used for other water quality projects in the region, including Armand Bayou, Oyster Creek, Cedar Bayou, etc.

BIG I-Plan Discussion

Rachel led a discussion of the status of BIG implementation relating to OSSF.

TCEQ anticipates considering the I-Plan for approval in January.

Rachel provided a sample annual report overview as well as a rough draft of the OSSF summary page to include in the annual report.

Work group participants agreed with H-GAC's proposed assessment of progress as "In progress, on schedule" for all three recommendations in the plan.

The workgroup voiced no objections to the proposed recommendations included in the OSSF summary page.

In general the workgroup indicated satisfaction with progress, especially with mapping. The focus in the coming year will be on updating maps, establishing target areas, and securing and distributing funds.

Rachel will update the OSSF summary page based on the discussions in the meeting. She will also draft a narrative to supplement the summary page. Both documents will be provided to the OSSF workgroup via e-mail for comment and consideration. The approved documents will be reviewed by the Coordination and Policy Work Group prior to consideration by the BIG at its annual meeting in May.

Legislative Update

The group briefly discussed legislative activities, including the approval of rules relating to safety covers and the proposed rules (subsequently considered by the TCEQ on December 5, 2012). More information is available on the TCEW website ([http://www.tceq.texas.gov/assets/public/legal/rules/rule lib/adoptions/12023285_aex.pdf](http://www.tceq.texas.gov/assets/public/legal/rules/rule_lib/adoptions/12023285_aex.pdf)).

Wrap-up

The BIG annual meeting is tentatively scheduled for May 22, 2013.