

**Wekiva River, Rock Springs Run, and Little Wekiva Canal Basin Management Action
Plan (BMAP)**

Public Education Discussion Meeting Summary

Tuesday, August 1, 2017

10:00 am – 10:56 am

By conference call

Attendees

Advisory Committee Members

Julie Bortles, Orange County
Mike Cliburn, Friends of Wekiva
Roxanne Groover, FOWA
Bart Harriss, FDOH-Orange County
Kim Ornberg, Seminole County
Katherine Rodgers, Apopka
Nancy Smith, FDOH-Seminole County
Charles Whitaker, Homeowners

Others

Eban Bean, UF
Quinten (Bob) Beitel, Citizen
Lee Brooks, FDACS
Tiffany Busby, Wildwood Consulting
Jane Derocher, St. Johns Riverkeeper
Teayann Duclos, E Sciences for FDOT
Chris Ferraro, DEP
Mark Frike, Kresge Environmental
Moir Homann, DEP
Barb Howell, DEP-Aquatic Preserves
Lisa Kreiger, Lee County
Lisa Lotti, City of Orlando
Kathryn Merchant, DEP
Rebecca Perry, TNC
Lisa Reim, Orlando
Bob Samson, Homeowners
Deborah Shelley, DEP-Aquatic Preserves
Nikki Wesson, Orlando

Discussion

Moir Homman asked Julie Bortles to explain their grant request and the activities Orange County would like to pursue.

Julie noted that the BMAP nitrogen loads to Wekiwa Springs include both onsite sewage treatment and disposal systems (OSTDS) loads and loads from urban fertilizer. Orange County's Section 319 grant requested bundled these sources as nonpoint source loads. Orange County has worked on public education on both load categories in the past. If the grant request is successful, the county would like to form focus groups to find out what the public in Orange County knows about OSTDS and about their yards. The county would also like to use the focus groups to better understand how to reach their residents—perhaps through homeowner's associations, billboards, or social media. The grant defines measureable goals for the education program and states that professional help in marketing will be sought for working with the focus groups and for branding.

Roxanne Groover asked who is developing the messages for the OSTDS sources. Julie responded that no one has developed the messages; the messages would be developed through the focus group process.

Tiffany Busby asked what county resources will be committed to the project, if the grant is awarded. Julie responded that they plan to use county general funds to fund the project and to match the grants. The county is open to creating partnerships with other local governments to expand the scope of the program.

Someone asked how the match works. Kate Merchant (who is with the DEP grant program) explained that the applications do not specify who the match is coming from, so the sources could be changed. The limitation is the scope of the project activities, although Kate stated that it would likely be okay to expand the geographic scope of the program.

Maira asked Julie if she has a copy of the Orange County grant application. Julie replied that she does and would be happy if Maira shared it with the group. Julie added that the proposal has a research phase and an implementation phase. They hope to develop a catch-phrase and some branding as part of the effort and they would be willing to share those materials with other partners.

Tiffany asked Julie what role she would envision for other partners.

Julie explained that with additional partners, they could expand to have additional focus groups in different areas; it is possible that geographic differences are important for messages and for the delivery methods. This expansion would provide more information up front for a campaign. For example, with certain demographics it may be important to avoid the use of social media, because they are not frequent users of this communication channel.

Bob Samson gave an example of the Central Florida Crime Prevention Group. When they investigated their audience, they found out that their target audience did not use social media nor cell phones, so it is smart to understand your audience before designing your approach.

Bart Harriss asked if the education campaign will include information about rule changes for onsite systems. Bart added that there is usually training for Florida Department of Health (FDOH) inspectors, for contractors, and for industry representatives, but not for homeowners. Information will be needed for homeowners about the BMAP upgrades and modification requirements.

Moira replied that those are important tools, but we expect large education campaigns to start at the more basic level about the bigger picture of springs and their pollution sources, before providing detailed information about homeowner options. Julie added that many residents live in a springs basin but don't know how springs are affected by their activities. The idea is to reach out to residents and to build their knowledge and change behaviors. Julie stated that the staff don't want to assume they know what needs to be said or how to say it; they want to use focus groups to understand what people know and what messages are effective.

Roxanne commented that there isn't just one area where education is needed. As the new requirements are put into place, homeowners will have questions. The agencies—FDOH and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)—need to be proactive on having good information ready and to have their staff be prepared to answer those questions. People are not aware that they are part of this issue, so they are expected to have a lot of questions.

Bob added that residents aren't convinced that they are part of the problem; this makes the message more complex.

Roxanne added that we should make sure that the entities with regulatory authority are answering the questions and that they are prepared with accurate, consistent answers. And misinformation or contradictory information should be addressed. Each agency should have a designated point-of-contact. These include DEP, the State FDOH, and the local FDOH offices.

Kate asked what changes to the rules are occurring. Moira responded that FDOH is expanding the types of septic fields that can be installed to address nitrogen treatment and are eligible for permits.

Kim Ornberg stated that Seminole County would be interested in pursuing a partnership on the Orange County grant. Kim added that the county has also applied for Section 319 grant funding to support implementation and public awareness of their new fertilizer ordinance.

Deborah Shelley commented that she is encouraged by this discussion and plans for additional homeowner education.

Mike Cliburn stated that it is a good idea to identify experts to answer questions from residents. These experts should have credibility and be a good spokesperson—and it could be more than one person.

Moira offered to spread the word about the possibility of partnerships.

There was discussion about how to follow up with the suggestion to have answers ready at the agencies. Julie suggested that some questions might be gleaned from the focus groups. Moira noted that DEP has a list of questions that were provided by Wekiva residents, which could be used as a starting point. DEP will start grouping them and trying to develop answers for them.

Bob commented that, from the homeowner's perspective, the messaging is not consistent right now. Everyone—whether you live in Apopka or Seminole County—should hear the same message.

Adjourn

The conference call ended at 10:56 am.

Action items

Julie—provide Moira with an electronic copy of the Orange County public education grant proposal.

Moira—share the grant proposal with the larger group.

Moira—share Roxanne's comments about readiness of information from the key agencies for homeowners subject of new BMAP requirements.

Kim—follow up with Julie on possible grant partnerships.