Homeowner Questions

1. Has an environmental study been done in their specific area to show that the soil type and geology in their area requires a new mandated solution? What is the cost-benefit of any proposed solution?
2. What are the goals of the mandated solution? How much of a reduction per septic system is necessary to achieve nitrogen reduction goals? The answer to these questions is dependent on the answer to Question 1 and should be stated as a Percent reduction of nitrogen.
3. What are the total costs to the home owner of any mandated solution? It has been common for total capital costs to range from $25K to $50K and ongoing annual costs, including power, maintenance, fees, etc. to be quite high. Don't forget to include things like:
    - Site engineering and design costs
    - All costs of permitting and inspections and/or recertification
        - Are permits required to be renewed on an annual basis?
    - Equipment, how many tanks? Complexity of mechanicals involved
    - Wiring costs, including the upgrading of a home's electrical panel if necessary
    - Hauling of excess fill dirt from the site
    - Restoration of landscaping and sprinklers after installation
    - Possible restoration of sidewalks and driveway (some solutions require extra room so they are installed under your walkways and driveway)
    - What remains visible in your yard? Cost to camouflage
    - Annual operating expenses
    - Service requirements, replacement filters compliance testing and/or other supplies
4. Will the use of a specific type of septic system, or low pressure sewer system reduce the value of their home, or be perceived as a negative to a prospective homebuyer?
5. What then, are the actual costs per pound of nitrogen removal? This should be the comparative value between two or more solutions. The average home produces approximately 22.5 pounds of nitrogen annually. As a point of comparison, each bag of fertilizer that covers 5,000 sq. ft. of grass contains 3.2 lbs. of nitrogen. Further, a tree absorbs 10 lbs. of nitrogen annually. Comparative examples help homeowners to understand differences in solutions.
6. Does the installation change the grading of landscape, producing a mound? Will a mound create drainage issues for their home or neighbors?
7. Is a maintenance contract necessary to keep the system running due to the complexity of the design?
    - Who is the maintenance contract with? Contractor, county, third party?
    - Frequency of maintenance requirements
    - Cost of maintenance contracts
    - What is the response time and is it guaranteed in the event of a failure?

    - What happens when there are significant area wide failures such as hurricanes affecting thousands of electrically operated septic systems or electrically operated low pressure sewer systems?
- If a home owner can do maintenance, what are the training costs?
- Who becomes liable if commercial maintenance or replacement parts are no longer available?
- Will elderly homeowners be able to manage financially or physically owning and operating costly and complex systems?

8. What are the impacts of a gated community on costs/design/maintenance?
9. Who is liable for the design and performance guarantees made for the systems?
    - Contractor, county, or state if mandated
10. Is there a loss of property rights?
    - Do homeowners give up clear title through an easement for access to the equipment on their property?
11. What happens when homeowners are on vacation for a longer period of time? (inactivity)
    - Does the system need to be shut down?
    - Is a system restart necessary? Costs?
12. What happens if homeowner has an event that overloads their system? (over activity)
    - House guests for an extended period
    - Large social gathering
13. Is the system operation and effectiveness sensitive to drugs such as antibiotics, chemotherapy, or other household products?
14. What are the system warranties? What are the “demonstrated” lifespans of each alternative?
15. What happens in the event of an area power failure? These questions apply to alternative septic system designs that require pumps as well as low pressure systems that have limited storage capacity or grinder pumps and depend on power to move sewage to a lift station.
    - Do you need to restrict water use during a power outage?
    - Is formal restart of the system required?
    - How many hours before homeowners cannot use their home due to backups
        - Who covers the cost of a hotel in the event of wide spread and lengthy power and equipment failures?
16. Does homeowners’ insurance cover backups of sewage into a home due to septic or power failures?
17. How long has the specific technology been in use?
    - References of homeowners to contact
    - How many are in use today? Where?