

# **Onsite Sewage Treatment and Disposal Systems (OSTDS) Remediation Plan Meeting Summary**

*Tuesday, December 6, 2016*

*2:00 PM*

*Wakulla County Public Library*

*4330 Crawfordville Highway, Crawfordville, Florida*

## **Attendees**

### *Advisory Committee Members*

Curtis Baynes, Property Owner

Katherine Davis, Florida Department of Health

Stan Derzypolski, Other Interests

Bob Deyle, Environmental Interest

Roxanne Groover, Other Interests

Theresa Heiker, Leon County

Sheree Keeler, Wakulla County

### *Others*

Deji Ajose-Adeogun, Dewberry

Kristina Bridger, Leon County

Tiffany Busby, Wildwood Consulting

Greg DeAngelo, FDEP

David Edwards

Marcy Frick, Tetra Tech

Kathleen Greenwood, FDACS

Pamela Hall

Kenny Hayman, DEP

Chuck Herr, Wakulla County

Moira Homann, DEP

John Kraynak, Leon County

Sondra Lee, City of Tallahassee

Jack Leppert

Debbie Lightsey

Roy Lima, Florida Forestry Service

Sean McGlynn, WSA FOWS

Cheryl Minskey, DEP

Mike Murphy, Mott MacDonald

Johnny Richardson, Leon County

Eb Roerder, FDOH

Jerrick Saquibal, NFWFMD

Travis Shannon, DRMP

Stephen Sider, ETM

Leland Smith, G&A

Tom Taylor, WSA Services

Elke Ursin, FDOH

Edgar Wade, Leon County

Rich Wieckowicz

Heather York, Wildwood Consulting

## **Welcome and Introductions**

Tiffany Busby welcomed attendees to the fourth meeting of the OSTDS advisory committee. She thanked Wakulla County for the use of the meeting space. She stated that the focus of the meeting will be to look at the nitrogen contributions to the Upper Wakulla River and Wakulla Springs and specifically at the contribution from OSTDS. She stated that the meeting format will be different from annual meetings because the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) wants to engage the committee members specifically. She stated that attendees could offer public comments at different points during the meeting. Attendees introduced themselves. She introduced Moira Homann as the Basin Coordinator and main point of contact for this basin.

## **Upper Wakulla River and Wakulla Springs Basin Management Action Plan**

Moira Homann thanked attendees for coming to the meeting. She provided an overview of the agenda. She reminded committee members of the Sunshine Law requirements.

### **Recap Items**

Moira provided an overview of follow up items from the last meeting. She stated that one potential funding option for a facility plan is a planning grant from the Department of Economic Opportunity. Moira will provide a link to the website in a follow up email to stakeholders. She stated that the Priority Focus Area (PFA) maps and text have been revised. Committee members provided some feedback. The final draft will be available in the near future.

### **OSTDS Remediation**

Moira reminded attendees of the three parts of the remediation plan including science, project, and public education and outreach. She stated that the public education and outreach plan would be a main focus of the meeting today. She stated that the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) would come back to the committee with a summary of the priorities and efforts that the group may choose to pursue.

### **Public Education**

Tiffany Busby stated that she wanted to talk about the education plan today and hoped to gain feedback and input from the committee and attendees. The three components of the public education plan including the target audience, message, and existing piggyback opportunities.

The first component of the plan is the audience. Curtis Baynes stated that the efforts in the area have been focused on surface waters in Leon County and money has been committed to projects with economic, rather than environmental benefits. He believes the county commission is the priority audience. He stated that in the past septic tanks have been thought of as a public health issue rather than a pollution issue. Tiffany stated that we have heard from some springsheds that many people believe that if the systems are functioning, then they are not an issue. Curtis added that decision makers have thought of septic tanks as a neighborhood issue, rather than a regional issue. Theresa stated that the Leon County sales tax dollars have not been dedicated to economic issues only. She stated that there are dollars dedicated to septic to sewer projects too.

Sheree asked if there will be different messages for different audiences. Tiffany responded that it depends on what the committee decides. Sheree asked if the counties or state will be responsible for conducting the education. Moira stated that we would get to that discussion later during the meeting, but there is funding available for public education efforts through DEP.

Tiffany stated that we need to identify education we would like to conduct and develop a funding plan and estimate. There will be a table added to the basin management action plan (BMAP) identifying efforts and entities. Greg DeAngelo stated that more sponsors and more specificity helps with funding opportunities. Sheree stated that unfunded projects and unrealistic expectations from the stakeholders is a concern. Moira reminded everyone to be thinking about the 5, 10, and 15 year targets. Tiffany stated that it will be different educating the public about septic remediation or sewerage versus a wastewater treatment plant upgrade.

## Upper Wakulla River and Wakulla Springs Basin Management Action Plan

Rich Weikowitz asked if there was a stakeholder representing fertilizer applicators to lawns. Tiffany stated that there could be education for applicators, but today the focus is on septic tanks since urban fertilizer is a smaller piece of the nitrogen loading "pie" in this basin.

Tiffany asked if there are other audiences to consider in this basin. Curtis stated that there is a need to assist people find money for retrofits and replacements. Tiffany stated that this gets to the message question as well. Edgar Wade stated that this will be important since people need affordable solutions.

Theresa stated that citizens need to understand why this is a priority. She stated that renters and people vacationing in Florida are also affected. Bob Deyle stated that every voter is affected and so are builders and septic tank installers. Stan Derzypolski added school kids as an audience. Bob added environmental groups since they are likely to be advocates. Elke Ursin added real estate agents as an audience. Christina Bridger stated that some counties partner with environmental interests since they have staff. Curtis stated that all decision makers need to be educated.

Tiffany asked about message suggestions. Curtis stated that one message is an understanding of why septic tanks may be an issue. He stated that homeowners need help with financing, property owners need to understand costs, and builders need to understand what the market can afford as well as the cost of options.

Stan stated that the message should describe the nature of the challenge and how septic tanks fit in as the problem. Catherine stated that homeowners need to understand that they can have a perfectly functioning system and can still be a problem.

Stan stated that we need to explain what has been done already including the city's wastewater treatment plant upgrade and cost. Theresa stated that Leon County kept the message short for homeowners in the Woodside subdivision. The message was "Connect to Protect." Stan stated that the public should understand what the spring was like, what it is now and how they can help. Roxanne stated that homeowners need to know what their options are and what the problem is. She added that they should understand that they can be part of the solution.

Pam Hall stated that part of the solution is more than connecting to sewer. She stated that there are different approaches than can be financed by groups rather than individuals. Sondra stated that the message should include background information and a reason to make changes. She added that they need to take ownership in the decision and solution. She added that financial information would be helpful to include as part of the message.

A gentleman in the audience stated that a shifted baseline concept can be helpful. Debbie Lightsey stated that clean water is a huge topic in the state. She thought the message needed to help the audience understand that drinking water comes from the aquifer and can be seen at the spring. She stated that we all are part of the problem. This is a regional problem.

Tiffany stated that a survey was performed in Southwest Florida Water Management District and results revealed that springs rated as a low priority, but clean water was a high priority. Bob added that we need to be careful because we do not have a problem with drinking water and a

## Upper Wakulla River and Wakulla Springs Basin Management Action Plan

"clean water" message may be too broad. Tiffany added that the drinking water standard for nitrogen is 10 milligrams per liter (mg/L) where the standard is 0.35 mg/L nitrate in surface waters. Curtis and Pam reiterated that this is a regional issue. Sean McGlynn stated that some springs are not contaminated and we need to focus on protecting Wakulla Springs.

Tiffany asked about other misperceptions regarding septic tanks. Roxanne stated that many people think that if the toilet flushes then everything is fine. She also added that now the perception is that septic tanks are bad and people with septic tanks are bad. This is a misperception. She stated that originally it was a public health issue that the septic tanks addressed and now we have more options.

Debbie Lightsey stated that another misperception is that our drinking water source is from lakes or rivers. Residents who moved here from areas where surface waters are a drinking water source may not realize our water comes from the ground and in a sensitive area.

Bob stated that another misperception could be equity in cost. Another misperception is that the dark water at Wakulla Springs. He stated that people cannot see nitrogen and solving the problem will not make the water blue again.

Sondra stated that consuming nitrogen is not a health concern, but an environmental concern. Elke stated that there is a misperception that the septic systems are free but there is a lifecycle cost. Stan stated that we need to look at all the sources because fertilizer also is a problem.

Tiffany asked the committee about existing or planned education efforts that we could piggyback on. Debbie stated that there is a program in the schools. Bob stated that there are physical models he has seen used by the city to demonstrate where the water goes. He suggested contacting Lauren Prep. Roxanne added that she has displays and learning tools as well including little septic tanks. She stated that it is important to use the models correctly.

Bob suggested the use of models at a variety of local festivals. Debbie stated that the Tallahassee Museum had a display at one time. Sean added that Lincoln High School has a demonstration stormwater pond.

Stan stated that he toured the wastewater treatment plant at one time and it made a big impression. Christina Bridger stated that it might be useful to think of places around the state where people already congregate such as airports, malls, and movie theaters. Theresa stated that the homebuilders have an annual show at the civic center. She added that the county offers a first time homeowner seminar and there is an annual parade of homes too.

Kenny Hayman suggested the city's program called Think About Personal Pollution (TAPP), the Wakulla Environmental Institute, and state office buildings.

Elke stated that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) promotes Septic Smart week in September. Sheree added that there may be opportunities with Earth Day events and with the Museum of History. Also, the Florida Water Environment Association promotes healthy communities annually in April.

## **Upper Wakulla River and Wakulla Springs Basin Management Action Plan**

Debbie suggested contacting Florida Springs Institute to see if they also have models and to learn about their education efforts. Stan suggested education during Florida State University football games. Pam Hall stated that there is a need to gain feedback from the audience.

Tiffany stated that she would like to pull these ideas together and send them back out to the committee for feedback. After we have a plan then we can build a list of efforts by stakeholder with estimated costs. If the committee would like a public education campaign as part of the effort then they could look at changes in behavior. Some springsheds are choosing to do this, but it does take resources. This type of effort would be eligible for a federal 319(h) grant.

Pam stated that we need to ask the audience what they believe the solutions are so we understand their thinking.

Tiffany stated that the most important audience is probably elected officials and we will reach out to them for feedback. Moira stated that a campaign on the west coast called "Be Floridian" has been successful for fertilizer awareness and reduction of residential use. Curtis stated that success should be based on the effectiveness of nitrogen reduction. He said we also could look at how frequently systems are pumped out and how many retrofits have been completed. Tiffany stated that public education will be a process and the message may change over time. She added that the committee does not have to know the whole 20-year education strategy now.

Bob requested that the committee should not be limited to identifying three priorities. He would prefer to rank all of the options or to respond that a priority is supported or not supported. Tiffany stated that we can use this approach. The goal is to understand what the committee wants to pursue overall, but the priorities are not a permanent decision.

Moira stated that DEP will compile the lists with a table will be at the bottom. Stan liked the idea of ranking the top five options. Tiffany stated that the goal is not to exclude anything. She is simply wanting feedback so that we can characterize the area's priorities in the BMAP text.

Roxanne suggested that it would be good to think about partnerships, because the Florida Onsite Wastewater Association (FOWA) and others can assist with the efforts.

Debbie stated that there may be efforts going on at this time. She wanted to ensure that education efforts don't wait eight to 12 months to begin to correspond with the adoption of the revised BMAP.

### **Scientific Information**

Tiffany stated that scientific information needs to be compiled and listed in the BMAP. She stated that this effort has already begun. We also have the Nitrogen Source Inventory Loading Tool (NSILT). She asked if there was other information to include. Bob stated that the Wakulla Springs Alliance completed a grant funded project to assess nitrogen contributions from sinking leaks. He stated that there was a gap in the NSILT. He stated that he is expecting feedback, and would like to add this document to the scientific information.

Roxanne stated that the Florida Department of Health (FDOH) inventory tool should be added. Elke stated that it is called the "Florida Water Management Inventory." Greg stated that some

## **Upper Wakulla River and Wakulla Springs Basin Management Action Plan**

committees have found holes in the inventory and FDOH has gone back in phase two to fill in the gaps. He stated that there is good coverage here.

Sean stated that a student from Penn State has been looking at prioritized areas for septic system remediation or sewerage. He suggested Jamie Hughes present her system. Bob stated it is a geographic information system (GIS) overlay system that ranks individual parcels for septic tanks, sewer, or any other system.

Curtis stated that there is a 2030 Master Sewer Survey. Sondra stated that she could send it to Moira. Stan added that he could send the Florida Home Builders Association septic inventory to Moira. Bob added that he could send Jeff Chanton's report on performance based systems. Anthony Gaudio stated that he could send the report for NSF245. Elke stated that she could send the report for the federal 319(h) grant funded project in draft format.

### **Funding Available for Education Programs**

Moira displayed a slide with information for the federal 319(h) grant. She stated that she would include a link to the funding in the follow up email to this meeting.

Cheryl Minskey stated that there are two pots of money available now. The first is for education through local governments and the other is for typical projects. Greg added that DEP prioritizes the projects and U.S. EPA makes the final decision. Tiffany stated that this is federal funding. The required matching funds can be in-kind funding as well as cash. The second pot of funding is for construction projects with an education component.

Sheree stated that it is difficult to discuss grant partnerships under the sunshine law. Tiffany stated that she would be glad to help. Roxanne stated that she would be willing to write up information for what FOWA could provide.

Theresa stated that there is a lot more to the remediation plan than just education and more needs to be happening during these meetings. Tiffany added that the legislature does not say what must be done or how much must be spent on public education. The committee needs to figure out how much public education is needed.

### **Annual Progress Report Process/Schedule**

Moira stated that DEP will begin pulling together the annual progress report describing all efforts in the basin beyond wastewater and septic systems. She stated that the reporting period is from November 1, 2015 through October 31, 2016. The progress report includes project updates and water quality updates. Moira added that biological information would be updated if updates are available since the BMAP was adopted. Project update requests will be sent out by November 19, 2016 and responses are expected by January 20, 2017.

Tiffany offered an opportunity for public comment and announcements.

### **Next Meeting Date**

The next meeting has been scheduled for Tuesday, February 14, 2017 at 2:00 pm.

## **Upper Wakulla River and Wakulla Springs Basin Management Action Plan**

### **Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 4:31 pm.

### **Action Items**

- Moira will provide the link to the Department of Economic Opportunity funding.
- Moira will post the FOWA 30 and 60 second public service announcements.
- Sondra will send the 2030 Master Sewer Survey to Moira for posting.
- Stan will send the FHBA septic inventory to Moira for posting.
- Bob Deyle will send Jeff Chanton's report on performance based systems to Moira for posting.
- Elke will send a link to a final report for a Section 319(h) grant funded project to Moira for posting.
- Moira will send the link to the new Section 319(h) project proposal solicitation.
- Moira will check room availability for the February meeting.