

**Basin Management Action Plan
Wakulla Springs and Upper Wakulla River
Overview of Onsite Sewage Treatment and Disposal Systems Initiative**

Background

To restore the water quality of the Upper Wakulla River and Wakulla Springs, the Department of Environmental Protection initiated a basin management action plan process in January 2013. While stakeholders in the basin have made progress in addressing sources of nutrient loading, there remains uncertainty whether the total maximum daily load goal of 0.35 mg/l nitrate + nitrite will be achieved in the near future. In particular, additional time is needed to confirm the ultimate nitrate + nitrite concentration reductions at the spring in response to the completion of the City of Tallahassee's Wastewater Treatment Facility upgrade in November 2012.

The Department recognizes that onsite sewage treatment and disposal systems (OSTDS) are a significant source of nitrate + nitrite loading in the basin. If the TMDL target is not reached in five years management strategies and projects to address the loading from OSTDS sources, particularly in the areas where the aquifer is most vulnerable, will be an important component of water quality restoration necessary to meet the TMDL. Therefore the Department has formulated an approach that will allow adoption of the BMAP to move forward, with the advantages of immediate recognition of existing measures already planned or in place as well as establishing a mechanism to proceed with developing potential additional strategies should they be necessary in the second iteration.

The objectives of this initiative are to identify effective strategies to reduce nutrient loads from OSTDS to ensure implementation through stakeholder commitments and BMAP authority. This initiative is intended to position the BMAP and stakeholders with additional ready-to-implement load reduction management actions for the next five-year iteration of the BMAP if they are needed based on water quality information. This process will also help identify possible challenges and their solutions associated with implementation of management strategies.

This effort will be initiated by the Department and include the Florida Department of Health, Leon County, Wakulla County, the City of Tallahassee and other interested parties. Ultimately, the initiative will form a foundation for an assessment and development of additional reduction strategies ready for inclusion into the update to the BMAP, if necessary, in five years after adoption.

Moving Forward

- **Phase I:** Prior to BMAP adoption, estimate the impacts from OSTDS and identify the potential management strategies for more detailed review as part of the initiative.
- **Phase II:** Within the first 30 months after BMAP adoption, discuss with stakeholders the appropriate effort and placement of nitrate + nitrite reduction strategies.
- **Phase III:** At the 30-month anniversary of BMAP adoption, the Department will complete an agency report proposing necessary reductions, the entities responsible for those reductions, and appropriate management strategies.
- **Phase IV:** After development of the agency report, stakeholders will have time to discuss the report and propose management strategies suggested for their jurisdiction necessary to meet the reduction targets.

Projected Milestones

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- December 2013: Adopt the Upper Wakulla and Wakulla Springs BMAP.
- January 2015: Completion of DOH Onsite Sewage Nitrogen Reduction Strategies Study.
- July 2016: Agency report that identifies reduction targets and appropriate management strategies.
- January 2019: Complete an assessment and revise the Upper Wakulla and Wakulla Springs BMAP, if necessary, to include additional management strategy responsibilities based upon the OSTDS Initiative.

