



Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District

40 Courtland Street NE | Atlanta, Georgia 30303

Septic Subcommittee **Meeting Agenda**

October 6, 2015, 1 p.m.

Harry West Room B on Level 'C'

R. Charles Loudermilk Center for the Regional Community

40 Courtland Street, NE Atlanta, Georgia

I. Welcome, Introductions and Public Comment Period**

I. Discussion Topics

- a. **Preview WelSTROM Website**
- b. **Septic System Tracking and Planning**
- c. **Septic Disposal Survey Preliminary Results**
- d. **Septage Receiving Facilities**
- e. **Septic System Coordination**

II. Other Topics

III. Next Steps

**A 10-minute period for public comments is designated at the beginning of each regular TCC meeting. Each speaker must sign-up 15 minutes prior to the meeting start time. Each speaker will be limited to two minutes. If the comment period expires before all citizens have an opportunity to comment, speakers will be invited to provide their comments in writing.

PlanUpdate@northgeorgiawater.com for additional comments

www.northgeorgiawater.org

SEPTIC SYSTEM TRACKING AND PLANNING

Background

The 2009 District Plan estimated that one-fifth of residential wastewater and one-tenth of all wastewater generated in the District is treated by septic systems. Each local government should plan for future sewer and un-sewered areas as part of their Comprehensive Land Use Plan and local wastewater master plans.

Many local Boards of Health in the Metro Water District are currently utilizing or planning to join the Georgia Department of Public Health's WelSTROM (Well and Septic Tank Referencing and Online Mapping) database to record septic systems by new building permits, repair permits and failures.

Current Status

Action Item 8.1 of the 2009 District Plan calls for local governments to develop a plan identifying future septic systems. The local government should identify transitional areas underdeveloped or served by septic system but planned for sewer. Planning must include policies to address connection to sewer in the near and long term. The 2009 Plan does not go into detail on how to develop long term policies for transitioning un-sewered areas to sewer.

Tracking and recording the location of existing systems is not currently addressed in the 2009 District Plan.

Opportunities

1. Local governments may find it helpful to have suggested items to consider when creating long term plans.
2. The WelSTROM database is an online portal with up to date information and offers a public view for utilities and homeowners to access.
3. Georgia Department of Public Health encourages all local County Boards of Health to use WelSTROM for ease of information sharing.
4. WelSTROM shares specific information on the locations of reported failures and repairs, which can inform future proposals and allow communities to strategically target areas with greatest need.

Challenges

1. County Boards of Health may not be interested in joining the WelSTROM database.
2. Septic systems installed before 2007 may not be recorded in the WelSTROM database unless there is record of a repair permit or failure.

Possible Management Measures

1. Update action item 8.1 to Septic System Tracking and Planning.
2. Expand language on developing long term plans for transitioning un-sewered areas to sewer.
3. County Boards of Health should input information on building permits approved, repairs for septic and reported failures to the WelSTROM database.
4. Encourage County Boards of Health to record all existing septic systems in the WelSTROM database, if funding is available.

SEPTAGE RECEIVING FACILITIES

Background

Every county within the Metro Water District has at least one facility where septage can be disposed of properly. Each facility has its own unique set of policies and costs associated with accepting the septage. According to recent survey data, the volume of septage received at the facilities can vary greatly with some facilities having received zero gallons of septage over an entire year. This variability raises the question: Are there current policies that discourage a pumper/hauler from disposing of septage to an EPD permitted facility for proper disposal?

Current Status

To help minimize illegal dumping within the District, the 2009 District Plan requires every local government to develop a plan for the disposal of septage generated within their jurisdiction at local wastewater treatment plants or alternative disposal locations.

During the meeting, we will review the latest results from the Septage Receiving Facilities Survey to help inform the discussion of various issues discussed below.

Opportunities

- The development of consistent strategies for acceptance of septage waste across facilities within the District may make it easier for pumper/haulers to navigate their options when choosing a location to dispose of septage potentially leading to fewer illicit discharges.
- Improvements in manifest collection and auditing may provide an incentive for pumper/haulers to dispose of septage to a permitted facility potentially leading to fewer illicit discharges.
- Education to pumpers/haulers on proper septage disposal to include a publicly available listing of EPD permitted facilities in the 15-county area with local pricing and policies defined.

Challenges

- Inter-jurisdictional coordination for receiving septage flows across jurisdiction lines.
- Increased costs related to sampling and administration.
- Concerns over taking additional high strength waste affecting treatment processes.

Outstanding Questions and Recommendations for Sub-committee

1. Approximately half of the facilities within the District do not submit manifests to the local Health Department as required in the 2009 District Plan. Would there be benefit to the District developing a standard manifest form and recommended protocols for manifest submittals to the local Health Department?
2. While the District staff does not intend to set universal charges for septage, would a rate guidance document provided by the District be of use?
3. Would a regionally consistent pricing strategy improve conditions for pumper/haulers? If so, what strategies (e.g. permit fee, admin fee, out of region fee, etc.) would be best suited for inclusion?
4. Some utilities within the District sample septage loads at time of disposal to reduce the risk of high strength waste or illicit chemicals disrupting plant processes. Would it be helpful for the District develop best management practices for septage sampling?
5. The District recommends all receiving facilities annually report the amount of received septage to both the District and local Health Department to better track trends and evaluate policy.