

GETTING FROM SEPTIC TO SEWER A GUIDANCE TOOL

A Florida League of Cities Webinar

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JonesEdmunds

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WHY IS THIS TOPIC IMPORTANT TO ME?

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Jackson Blue Springs



Silver Springs

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A HISTORY OF SEPTIC TANKS

- In use since the turn of the 20th century
- Housing boom outgrew the rate of sewer construction
- Today septic systems serve more than 1 in 5 households in the US

Portion of homes relying on a septic system or cesspool by state, 1990.

Share of new homes built with septic systems by region, 2015.

Data: National Association of Home Builders

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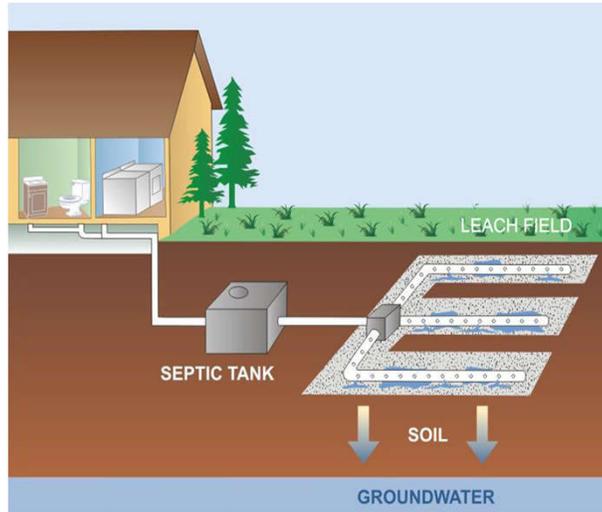
THE NUMBERS IN FLORIDA

- Approximately 2.6 million septic tanks are in Florida
- 12% of the septic tanks in the US are in Florida
- Approximately 30% of the state relies on septic tanks

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SEPTIC SYSTEMS DISCHARGE

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- Many septic systems are failing
- Even those in perfect operation discharge nitrogen at high levels

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THE BACK STORY

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- Septic systems have been put in sensitive areas
- 2016 springs protection legislation identified FDEP, Local Governments, and Utilities as responsible parties
- 2016 massive algal bloom in the Indian River Lagoon
- FDEP went on a state tour to discuss the CHALLENGES!



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A HOT TOPIC OF A LOT OF STAKEHOLDERS

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- Regulators
 - FDEP
 - FDOH
 - WMDs
- Local Governments/Utilities
- Environmental Groups
- Property Rights Groups
- Builders/Realtors
- Legislators
- John Q. Citizen



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SEPTIC TO SEWER CHALLENGES

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- Engineering (not really)
- Cost & Funding
- Sustained Political Leadership
- Public Education and Acceptance
- On-going Proliferation of New OSTDSs



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COST & FUNDING CHALLENGES

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- \$15,000 to \$25,000+ per lot to extend sewer
 - Is there existing water service to an area?
 - How far are you from the treatment facilities?
 - Do you have plant capacity?
 - What are your site conditions?
 - What is the population density?
- Fairness/equity - Who should pick up the tab?
- Potential funding sources
 - State & federal funds
 - Local sources



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Funding Sources

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External Funding

- Springs Funding/
Amendment 1 Dollars
- USDA Rural Development
- CDBG
- SRF Clean Water Fund/
Small Community WW Grant
- TMDL Grant Program
- 319 Grant Funds
- Legislative Appropriation
- WMD Funding
- Economic Development

Internal Funding

- Connection Fees
- User Fees
- MSBU/MSTU
- CRA
- LOST
- Ad Valorem
- REDI

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SUSTAINED POLITICAL LEADERSHIP

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- A controversial topic at best
- Local commitment is expected
 - Mandatory connection ordinances
 - Matching funds
 - Utility rate structures to address needs
- How to make it work and get re-elected
 - Timing is everything
 - Build a coalition of champions
 - Use your local sparkplugs
 - Environmental protection and economic development
 - Regulatory and academic support



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PUBLIC EDUCATION & ACCEPTANCE

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- Homeowners must understand that they are part of the problem
- Impacts to homeowners
 - Capital cost
 - Monthly WW charges
 - Disruption during construction
 - Timing – “I just replaced my drainfield”
- Consistency in multi-year implementation



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PUBLIC EDUCATION & ACCEPTANCE

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- Be prepared with the facts but...
- **Use lots of visuals**
- Explain the finances
 - Amortization of Connection Fees
 - Put in terms they can relate to
 - Hardship programs
- Guest speakers
- Be proactive with the media
- Find your local sparkplug
- Dealing with the holdouts



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ONGOING PROLIFERATION OF SEPTIC TANKS

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- Encourage state level cooperation
- Engage your local county health departments
- Local ordinances and developer agreements can minimize the addition of more septic systems

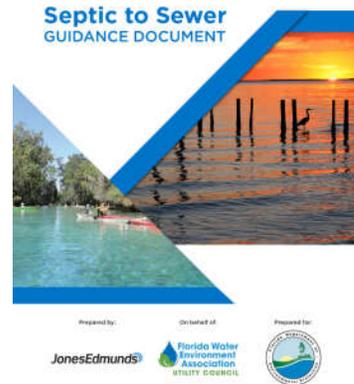


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SEPTIC TO SEWER GUIDANCE DOCUMENT

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The intent is not to offer a comprehensive study, but collect thoughts, ideas, and resources from multiple sources in a single location.



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SEPTIC TO SEWER GUIDANCE DOCUMENT

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- Goal: To assist local governments in navigating challenges of septic to sewer transition
 - Fact vs Fiction
 - Technical Alternatives Overview
 - Feasibility & Cost
 - Customer Incentives & Requirements
 - Public Education
 - Elected Official Involvement
 - External Funding Sources
 - Local Funding Alternatives
 - Legal & Regulatory Documents
- Case Studies



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FUN FACTS... SOME THINGS WE LEARNED**JonesEdmunds**

- The first question is always about money... by far the biggest issue
- Every community is different in what they will and will not accept, particularly when it comes to what they are willing to pay
- Political consistency is essential for success
- There is definitely a lack of understanding on the part of the public as to the impact of septic systems
- Grant funding is more available for wastewater than water



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CITY OF TALLAHASSEE**JonesEdmunds**

- Septic Over Sewer (SOS) is a program targeted at the 130 septic tanks in the Wakulla Springs Priority Focus Area (PFA)
 - Public outreach program
 - Connections are made at no cost to the customer
 - Springs funding with required match
 - Matching funds fulfilled by the 319(h) Education Grant and previously installed wastewater lines



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CITY OF CAPE CORAL

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- The Utilities Extension Project (UEP) provides City water, sewer and irrigation services as well as new roads storm water improvements
 - Approx. 58,000 unsewered properties in the City
 - Dedicated a division of personnel presently made up of seven full-time staff
 - Citizens Action Center available to assist citizens with questions or concerns about the program
 - Funding through a one time customer assessment and SRF loan funds
 - Mandatory connection required



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CITY OF VERO BEACH

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- Vero Beach initiated its septic-to-sewer program in 2015, using an alternative technology called Septic Tank Effluent Pump (STEP) system
 - City Council committed to the septic-to-sewer program
 - Although there is no mandatory connection requirement, there are no new permits issued in Vero Beach for septic systems
 - Customers are (by ordinance) required to pump out their septic tanks and have them inspected regularly; if septic tanks fail, residents are required to connect to the City's system
 - Grant funding came through the SJRWMD for mainlines and service laterals to match the City's investment
 - Customer incentives were developed to encourage connection to the system but there was no assessment on the homeowner



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CITY OF ROCKLEDGE

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- Rockledge does not currently have an official septic-to-sewer program, but it is beginning to address the impact of the septic systems in their community on a project-by-project basis.
 - TMDL for Nutrients adopted by FDEP in the Indian River Lagoon Central Basin
 - Approximately 35% of the City's residents use septic systems
 - Grant dollars from the SJRWMD, FDEP (TMDL \$) and a \$1.2-million legislative appropriation
 - No assessment was charged and considered a major factor in the overwhelming acceptance with 139 out of 141 homeowners participating



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CITY OF JACKSONVILLE/JEA

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- JEA and the City of Jacksonville have pursued multiple programs for the elimination of septic tanks. The current program began in 2016 with a list of 35 neighborhoods monitored by the Duval County Health Department.
 - Projects will require 70% of property owners in the priority area to agree to connect and sign an access agreement before project design
 - The program will pay for all connection costs for projects funded as priority areas that achieve participation levels, as funding allows.
 - Requires connection to existing wastewater lines where available
 - Established a monthly "readiness to serve" charge for properties that do not connect within one year of availability and proper notice
 - Conducted a strong outreach program in the initially identified neighborhoods



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TAKING THE SHOW ON THE ROAD**JonesEdmunds**

- Presentations
 - FLOC
 - FAC
 - SEFLUC
 - FSAWWA
 - RRAC
 - FWRC
- Advertising
- Websites
- Advertisements
- One on One Meetings



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IN SUMMARY...**JonesEdmunds**

- Septic to sewer is being implemented successfully in some areas
- Other areas are facing challenges
- It requires long-term commitment at local and state levels
- We have to get the word out
- Funding is key!



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THANK YOU



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