

# RESEARCH REVIEW AND ADVISORY COMMITTEE

## ONSITE SEWAGE TREATMENT AND DISPOSAL SYSTEMS

### ADVISORY TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

AUTHORITY: SECTION 381.0065(4)(o), FLORIDA STATUTES

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Approved Minutes of the Meeting held at the Southwood Office Complex, Tallahassee, FL  
July 28, 2015

#### In attendance:

#### Research Review and Advisory Committee (RRAC) Members and Alternates:

##### In person:

- Eberhard Roeder (member, Department of Health)

##### Via teleconference:

- Quentin (Bob) Beitel (member, Real Estate Profession)
- Christopher Pettit (member, Local Government)
- John Schert (member, State University System)
- Clay Tappan (chairman, member, Professional Engineer)

##### Absent members and alternates:

- Ed Dion (alternate, Home Building Industry)
- Geoff Luebke (member, Restaurant Industry)
- Carl Ludecke (vice-chairman, member, Home Building Industry)
- Tony Macaluso (alternate, Real Estate Profession)
- Daniel Meeroff (alternate, State University System)
- Bill Melton (member, Consumer)
- Matt Surrency (alternate, Local Government)
- Robert Washam (alternate, Consumer)

#### Other attendees:

##### In person:

- Damann Anderson (Hazen and Sawyer)
- Douglas Buck (Florida Home Builders Association)
- Bill Helmich (FOWA)
- Richard Hick (DEP)
- Josefin Hirst (Hazen and Sawyer)
- Mark Repasky (FRLA)

##### Via teleconference:

- Maurice Barker (DEP)
- Charles (Ed) Brown (DOH, Marion)
- Glenn William Bryant (DOH, Citrus)
- Nanci Cornwell (Senator Hays Office)
- Jessica Crawford
- Kim Dinkins (Marion County)
- Kim Duffek (DOH, Orange)
- Victor Faconti (DOH, St. Lucie)
- Christianne Ferraro (DEP)
- Roxanne Groover (FOWA)
- Bob Himschoot (Septic Industry)
- Kathryn Lowe
- Christopher Rowe (PTI)
- Pam Tucker (Real Estate Industry)
- Tyler (Unknown)

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#### Department of Health (DOH), Onsite Sewage Program Section:

##### In person:

- Ed Barranco, Environmental Administrator, Onsite Sewage Programs
- Kendra Goff, State Toxicologist, Bureau of Environmental Health
- Andrew Reich, Acting Bureau Chief, Bureau of Environmental Health
- Elke Ursin, Research Program Coordinator, Onsite Sewage Programs

##### Via teleconference:

- Bart Harriss, Environmental Manager, Onsite Sewage Programs
- Marcelo Blanco, Environmental Health Program Consultant, Onsite Sewage Programs

1. **Introductions** – Five out of eight groups with non-expired members were present, representing a quorum. Chairman Tappan called the meeting to order at 9:45 a.m. The agenda was presented, introductions were made, and some housekeeping issues were discussed. Doug Buck asked for staff to check and see if expired members can stay on the committee until replaced. Elke Ursin would check on that.
2. **Review of previous meeting minutes** – The RRAC reviewed the minutes of the March 19, 2015 meeting. Quentin Beitel pointed out that he was incorrectly listed as an alternate when he should be a member.

**Motion by Quentin Beitel and seconded by Eberhard Roeder, for the RRAC to approve the minutes of the March 19, 2015 meeting as amended during the meeting. All were in favor, none opposed, and the motion passed unanimously.**

3. **Nitrogen Study Update** – Elke Ursin presented a 10,000 foot overview of the project to get everyone on the same page. In 2008 the Florida Legislature directed the Florida Department of Health to look at strategies to reduce nitrogen in onsite sewage treatment and disposal systems (OSTDS). The Department did a competitive solicitation and Hazen and Sawyer was selected as the contract provider. There has been a great deal of work done, and this would be discussed later during the meeting when Hazen and Sawyer present on the project. Elke Ursin went over what has happened since the March 2015 meeting and what the timeline is moving forward. The current status is that the Legislature appropriated \$10,000 to conclude the study. By December 31, 2015, the Department shall submit a final report to the Legislature containing:
  - a) Analysis of field monitoring of performance and cost of technologies at various sites
  - b) Analysis of soil and groundwater sampling at various sites to determine how nitrogen moves
  - c) Analysis of various models to show how nitrogen is affected by treatment in Florida-specific soils
  - d) Final reporting on all tasks with recommendations for science-based nitrogen reduction options for OSTDS

The Department will use the \$10,000 plus some Bureau of Environmental Health cash and budget authority to wrap up the contractor work by August 30, 2015. Elke Ursin is working on a website to have all the tasks and associated deliverables up and available for anyone to view. The holdup in getting this done is making sure any homeowner specific information is redacted from these online

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documents to protect their privacy. She said that if anyone wants a deliverable that they can contact her. The project cost was anticipated to be \$5 million, and the final spending amount is likely to come to around \$4.7 million which includes all the appropriated funds plus some cash from the Bureau of Environmental Health. Bob Himschoot said that the RRAC had recommended full funding and time to complete the project with the contract ending January 2016, but based on the information presented it appeared that both funding and time were cut. Doug Buck said that the RRAC and the experts have said that \$10,000 is a grossly inadequate amount of money to finish the project. Clay Tappan said that there is a great deal of history with this project and it does not look like more time or money will be made available. He suggested that the group make the best out of the situation and to move forward with the agenda. Elke Ursin went over the timeline for the project.

Damann Anderson presented the results for the Florida Onsite Sewage Nitrogen Reduction Strategies Study. He presented an overview of all the parts of the study in detail, then Kathryn Lowe with the Colorado School of Mines demonstrated the groundwater monitoring tool and Josefina Hirst demonstrated the life cycle cost assessment tool. He acknowledged the project team and the volunteer homeowners. Due to the project funding and timeline issues Tasks A, C, and D were not totally completed, but Task B was completed. Damann Anderson presented recommendations for the implementation of passive nitrogen reduction systems. Quentin Beitel asked what the status was on each of the systems now that the sampling is over. Damann Anderson said that systems 1 and 6 (same site) had the system removed due to costs, the homeowner for system 2 loves the system, the homeowner for system 3 is on the fence due to costs, the homeowner for system 4 loves the system, the homeowner for system 5 has mixed feelings due to costs, and the homeowner for system 7 is keeping the system.

The public was allowed to comment throughout. Some of the discussions were about the sulfide created during the denitrification step for the systems with sulfur as the treatment media, possible tank corrosion issues with extra sulfides, and how to apply the results of this work to the DEP Basin Management Action Plans. Andy Reich said that the Bureau is looking for help looking through this work and want the end product to be the best possible. Bob Himschoot recommended continued sampling for these systems. Roxanne Groover said that she was happy to hear about the reports recommendations for continued monitoring and sufficient DOH staffing. She said that implementation needs to address approved media sources, the approval process for the systems, the permitting process and how to handle use of existing tank and drainfield, the contractor processes, and how the systems will be inspected for compliance. Doug Buck asked what did not get done and Damann Anderson said the main thing is that there is no final project report tying all the pieces of the project together. Doug Buck then asked what Damann Anderson's opinion is on the path forward and if money could be found to create the final report, whether it is too late to do anything. Damann Anderson said that he would need to weigh the options but would require that the Department is on board with the project. Andy Reich hopes that if there is additional money that the project could be picked up and do additional work. He also encouraged everyone to stay engaged with this issue at both a state and local level.

Comments are due to Elke Ursin on the Draft Task B report by 7/30/15. Elke Ursin will send compiled comments to Hazen and Sawyer on the Draft Task B report on 8/1/15. Damann Anderson

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said that particular areas of focus for comments would be the recommended framework and conclusions and recommendations.

Damann Anderson mentioned that an article was published in the Water Environment and Technology Journal, which reaches a national audience, as well as an article in the June issue of the Florida Water Resources Journal. Florida is in the news with the work being done. Elke Ursin said she will present at the American Planning Association's Florida conference in September jointly with the Department of Economic Opportunity and Florida Atlantic University. Also, both Hazen and Sawyer and the Department will present at the National Onsite Wastewater Recycling Association / State Onsite Regulators Association conference in November. Hazen and Sawyer will also present at the Florida Onsite Wastewater Association conference in one week.

4. **Updates on Other Projects** – Elke Ursin gave an update on the Florida Water Management Inventory. The project is to create a statewide map showing the drinking water source and wastewater treatment method for all built properties. This tool ties in with the nitrogen issue, and will provide refined estimates for loading of nitrogen from OSTDS in sensitive watersheds. She said that funding had run out for the moment, and is actively looking for additional funding.
5. **Other Business** – None.
6. **Public Comment** – The public commented throughout the meeting.
7. **Closing Comments, Next Meeting, and Adjournment** – It was recommended that future meetings be held in larger rooms and possibly also at a centralized location.

**Motion by Eberhard Roeder and seconded by Quentin Beitel, for the RRAC to adjourn at 2:56 p.m. All were in favor, none opposed, and the motion passed unanimously.**

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#### Summary of action items from meeting:

- Doug Buck asked for staff to check and see if expired members can stay on the committee until replaced. Elke Ursin would check on that.
- Elke Ursin will update the Department Nitrogen Study website to include links to all deliverables for the project.
- 7/30/15 Comments are due to Elke Ursin on the Draft Task B report.
- 8/1/15 Elke Ursin will send compiled comments to Hazen and Sawyer on the Draft Task B report.
- Elke Ursin will post the presentations for this meeting on the website.