Septic to Sewer Conversion

Terri Lowery
Jones Edmunds
The Back Story

• Septic Systems in Sensitive Areas
• Springs Protection Legislation
• Responsible Parties
  – FDEP
  – Local Governments and Utilities
• Meeting with Drew Bartlett to discuss the CHALLENGES!
Septic to Sewer Challenges

- Engineering
- Cost
- Funding
- Sustained Political Will
- Public Education and Acceptance
- On-going Proliferation of New OSTDSs
Cost & Funding Challenges

- $15,000 to $25,000+ per lot to extend sewer to existing neighborhoods
- Typically combined with water service
- Potential Funding Sources
  - State & federal funds
  - Local sources
- Fairness/equity
  - Who should pick up the tab?
Public Education & Acceptance

- 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”
- Sustained Political Will
  - Consistency in multi-year implementation
The intent is not to offer a comprehensive study but collect thoughts, ideas and resources from multiple sources in a single location.
Septic to Sewer Guidance Document

- Assist local governments in navigating challenges of septic to sewer
  - 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
Fun Facts…Some Things We Learned

• 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 available for wastewater but not water
Case Studies

- **Broward County** made political decision in 1995. Expect to have eliminated all septic tanks by 2024. Had a Public outreach person for every community for the entire project. No assessment.

- **Vero Beach** used an alternative technology called STEP and had joint funding through SJRWMD to reduce costs to the homeowner. No assessment.

- **JEA** projects require 70% of property owners in the priority area to agree to connect and sign an access agreement before project. No assessment.

- **Cape Coral**’s Utilities Extension Project (UEP) provides City water, sewer and irrigation services as well as new roads storm water improvements.
Taking the Show on the Road - Promotion

- Presentations
  - FAC
  - FLOC
  - SEFLUC
  - FSARWA
  - RRAC
  - FWRC

- Advertising
  - Websites
  - Advertisements

- One on One Meetings
In Summary…..

• 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.
• Funding is key!
• We have to get the word out.
Thank You