



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF Environmental Protection

Marjory Stoneman Douglas Building
3900 Commonwealth Boulevard
Tallahassee, FL 32399

Ron DeSantis
Governor

Jeanette Nuñez
Lt. Governor

Noah Valenstein
Secretary

Blue-Green Algae Task Force Meeting Staff Minutes

August 1, 2019
9:00 AM

Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute, 5600 N US Highway 1, Fort Pierce, FL 34946

General subject matter considered: The Blue-Green Algae Task Force met to discuss review of innovative technologies request for information, regulation of septic tanks in Florida, and sanitary sewer overflows.

Attendee Name	Title	Status
Dr. Thomas Frazer	Facilitator	Present
Dr. Evelyn Gaiser	Member	Absent
Dr. Wendy Graham	Member	Present
Dr. Michael Parsons	Member	Present
Dr. Valerie Paul	Member	Present
Dr. James Sullivan	Member	Present

1. Secretary Noah Valenstein started off the meeting to enforce the dedication of the department, discuss topics that will be addressed by the Task Force, and thank the Governor, State Senate and House of Representative for a record level of funding to implement ideas that the Task Force will discuss.
2. Chief Science Officer Dr. Tom Frazer facilitated the meeting. Dr. Frazer lead a discussion with Task Force members on innovative technologies and potential types of funding, including what is needed to evaluate that a technology is effective, how to prioritize projects, and how to avoid unintended consequences. Discussion included considerations that may make a technology undesirable including human health considerations, longevity in the ecosystem, biologically unintended side effects, lack of supporting data, and lack of a monitoring or disposal plan.
3. Debbie Tipton, Department of Health, provided a presentation on the regulation of onsite treatment and disposal systems (OSTDS) in Florida. The presentation included an explanation of how conventional septic systems and drainfields work. Additional nutrient reductions using advanced treatment units such as aerobic treatment units, performance-

Meeting minutes are not intended to act as a transcript of the meeting. To watch a recording of the meeting, or to see the recommendations of the Blue-Green Algae Task Force, please visit ProtectingFloridaTogether.gov/state-action/blue-green-algae-task-force.

based treatment systems, and inground nitrogen reducing biofilters were discussed. She explained that aerobic treatment units can provide 50% nitrogen removal prior to discharge to a drainfield, whereas conventional septic tanks do not provide nitrogen removal.

4. Dr. Roeder, Department of Health, also provided a presentation on onsite treatment and disposal, focused on Task Force questions from previous meetings. Dr. Roeder also explained and presented on how DOH regulates the construction, permitting, inspection and enforcement of OSTDS.
 - a. Dr. Roeder explained that current rules are designed to protect public health and the environment, focusing on protecting the public from water born illnesses, and that minimum setback distances from wells and waterbodies are in place, as well as maximum application rates per area. He further explained that although conventional septic tanks do not provide nitrogen removal, 10-50% of nitrogen is removed through the drainfield. Finally, he explained that OSTDS are only intended to be used where sewer service is not available.
 - b. He stated that if the system is larger or more complex, including the disposal of hazardous waste, then the system is regulated by DEP. In addition to regulation, DOH also conducts research studies on OSTDS, and conducts product approval for new technologies. He further explained that some local ordinances and statutes require additional levels of treatment for certain areas. These requirements may require additional water table separation, nitrogen reducing systems, or performance-based treatment systems. He stated that DEP has identified regions (priority focus areas) requiring additional treatment, and DOH ensures that systems are permitted accordingly.
 - c. Dr. Roeder described that for permitting and tracking purposes, DOH maintains two systems: the Environmental Health Database, and the Florida Water Management Inventory.
 - d. Dr. Roeder stated that there are three advisory boards that the legislature has established to help DOH receive input from various stakeholders: Variance Board, Research Review and Advisory Committee, and Technical Review and Advisory Panel.
 - e. Dr. Roeder provided an update on current rule efforts that deal with nitrogen reduction, including new configurations for inground biofilters, additional requirements to be effective during repair or modification of existing systems, and streamlining innovative system permitting. He expressed that some challenges DOH is working to address are too much nitrogen in sensitive areas; systems failing due to legacy requirements; permitting on old lots; and funding concerns.
5. Task Force questions and comments focused on quantifying the extent of the nutrient load due to OSTDS; BMAP requirements, removal efficiencies, and additional data collection; additional maintenance requirements for ATUs; and costs.
6. John Truitt, Deputy Secretary for DEP's Regulatory Program, provided a high-level overview of sanitary sewer overflows (SSOs), including existing permitting and capacity requirements. He explained that there has been an increased focus on SSOs, which may be treated or untreated wastewater. Common causes include rain, line breaks, power outages,

equipment failure, contractor error, blockage, accidental, unknown, or other. The main causes during a wet weather event are inflow and infiltration during a rain event and loss of power. He further explained that DEP provides outreach to facilities throughout the year, and additional outreach and assistance during hurricane season.

7. Task Force discussion included common corrective actions and penalties, including in kind penalty projects; capacity analysis and expansion requirements; aging infrastructure and the correlation with inflow and infiltration concerns, including how to identify areas that are in most need of restoration. Mr. Truitt additionally described DEP and utility response procedures.
8. Public Comments was taken. Topics included:
 - a. Current state of septic system management in Florida;
 - b. A simplified version of the final report for the public;
 - c. Prevention technologies;
 - d. Harvesting algae for biofuel;
 - e. Removing/preventing over-abundance of nutrients and bringing balance back to natural habitats;
 - f. Biosolids;
 - g. Treatment technologies;
 - h. Differences between wastewater treatment systems and OSTDS;
 - i. Prioritizing funding based on data;
 - j. Existing Studies;
 - k. Coordination between DEP and DOH;
 - l. Standards for microcystin;
 - m. Remediation;
 - n. Holding contributors responsible;
 - o. Additional requirements for fertilizer application;
 - p. Protecting wetlands;
 - q. Cleanup of hazardous materials and mitigation downstream of C44;
 - r. Nutrient point source reduction;
 - s. Public noticing;
 - t. Stronger regulations;
 - u. Resources available through Florida Water Environmental Association;
 - v. Chemical spraying;
 - w. Developing creative and coordinated solutions.
9. Dr. Frazer provided closing remarks. Next meeting will address Stormwater and the health concerns of toxins.