

Wekiva Announcement

Tallahassee – The Florida Department of Health (DOH) announced today that it will present rule language for the Wekiva Study Area (WSA) to the Technical Review and Advisory Panel (TRAP) at its February 19th meeting at the Orlando Airport Marriott. While the 2007 Legislature appropriated \$1 million to the department to begin a multi-year study on cost effective nitrogen reduction systems, existing studies show that onsite sewage systems are significant contributors of nitrogen to groundwater in the Wekiva Study Area. As such the department believes that the 2004 Wekiva Parkway and Protection Act requires it to go forward with rule language to provide for nitrogen reduction systems in the WSA.

The proposed language would not impact onsite systems in areas that are scheduled to be sewerred by 2012 in an adopted local government master wastewater plan. The requirement to install performance based treatment systems meeting a 10 mg/L nitrogen discharge limit would apply to all new construction, as well as, systems being modified or repair. In addition the requirement to upgrade would be required during real estate transactions. The department estimates that these actions would significantly reduce the nitrogen load from onsite systems.

The estimated cost difference for performance-based treatment systems over conventional systems is from \$3,000 to \$10,000 and varies because of specific site conditions. In Wakulla County where the requirement for these systems was adopted last year by local ordinance the average cost is \$7700.

The public is invited to make comment at the TRAP meeting on Feb 19 or may submit any comments to the Bureau of Onsite Sewage Programs, 4052 Bald Cypress Way, Bin A08, Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1713. The proposed rule language follows and is also available online at www.MyFloridaEH.com on the bureau's web page.

The following standards shall apply in the Wekiva Study Area as defined in 369.316, F.S.

(a) In areas not scheduled, by an adopted local wastewater facility plan, to be served by a central sewer system by July 1, 2012, performance based treatment systems with a total nitrogen discharge limit of 10 milligrams per liter at the outlet of the treatment receptacle shall be required for new systems, modifications, and repairs. No increase in the authorized sewage flow allowances of 381.0065(4)(a), (b), and (g) shall allowed for use of these systems.

(b) In areas not scheduled, by an adopted local wastewater facility plan, to be served by a central sewer system by July 1, 2012, prior to completion of any real estate transaction for property with an onsite sewage treatment and disposal system that does not meet the above referenced standard, the seller must apply for and receive a construction permit to upgrade the system to a performance based treatment system with a total nitrogen discharge limit of 10 milligrams per liter at the outlet of the treatment receptacle. The system must be installed and receive final approval from the department within 18 months of the issue date of the permit.

(c) Land application of septage shall not be allowed.