

Research Review and Advisory Committee for the Bureau of Onsite Sewage Programs,

Minutes of the Meeting held by Telephone Conference

November 16, 2004

Approved January 20, 2005

In attendance:

Committee Membership and Alternates: David Carter (homebuilders); David Collins (realtors) (joined after call to order); Kevin Sherman (was given proxy by John Collins for FOWA); Paul Davis (DOH-Environmental Health); John Heber (citizen); Clay Tappan (professional engineers); Patti Sanzone (environmental interest group) (joined after call to order)

Not represented: state university system (not appointed)

Visitors: Jeff Chanton (Florida State University)

Department of Health (DOH), Bureau of Onsite Sewage Programs: Mark Hooks, Eberhard Roeder

1. Introductions

- a. Call to order: A quorum of five represented groups was reached. Chair David Carter called the meeting to order at 9:40 am.

2. Review of Minutes of Meeting 09/16/04

John Heber motions and Kevin Sherman seconds to approve the minutes as written. Unanimously approved.

David Collins joins the call.

3. Review and Comments on draft final report for Phase I of "Manatee Springs Onsite Sewage Disposal Systems Study" (aka "Karst Study").

John Heber and Kevin Sherman have some minor phrasing comments. John Heber provides his comments on his draft copy of the report; Kevin Sherman provided his comments to Eberhard Roeder by phone just prior to the meeting.

Patti Sanzone joins the call.

The committee considers if it needs to revisit the report one more time or approve it now and delegate the scrivener's changes to Eberhard Roeder. Upon hearing a couple of examples of the comments under consideration, Paul Davis moves to approve the report with minor changes that will address the comments. The motion is unanimously approved.

Mark Hooks comments that this Karst Study was very timely. It will be referred to in the Wekiva Study. The legislature had charged DOH with assessing and developing suggestions for addressing environmental impacts of onsite sewage disposal in the Wekiva area north of Orlando, which is also a karst area.

Jeff Chanton adds that FSU will work on publishing the study, which will give it more weight and scientific credibility.

David Carter asks how the study will be brought to the attention of the Technical Review and Advisory Panel (TRAP). Mark Hooks and Eberhard Roeder are not aware of a particular procedure to achieve this but add that Bureau Chief Gerald Briggs had planned to provide TRAP-members with a copy of the draft report. (Recorder's Note: The report draft of September 1, 2004 was distributed without further discussion at the TRAP-

meeting on October 21, 2004). David Carter requests notification in the event that TRAP begins to consider this study. Several members express interest in the next two TRAP meetings, which will be held on November 18 and December 16, 2004.

4. Updates on projects

- a. Taylor County: Eberhard Roeder reports that an Invitation-to-Negotiate for tracing and establishing the impact of OSTDS on water quality is in the final revisions within DOH. He reports that the beach quality monitoring data for the first quarter had maximum total nitrogen concentrations of about 1.5 mg/L in two of three sampling events, and 3.5 mg/L in the first sampling event. The nitrogen is mostly in organic form. Highest concentrations were observed at one of the background sites.

Eberhard Roeder suggests looking at studies that address the effect of converting from onsite systems to central sewer. He brings up three cases: Two of the communities in Taylor County in which the current project takes place have received funding for central sewer; the currently collected data could be used to compare the before and after water quality. A review of beach quality data in the Big Bend showed that Cedar Key in Levy County was among the worst with respect to pathogen indicators, even after bringing central sewer to most homes; data for the last four years suggest that stormwater management measures on Cedar Key had an observable effect on the observed pathogen indicator counts. Thirdly, the study that compared water quality at the town of Suwannee before and after construction of a wastewater treatment plant did not reach a definite conclusion because both sets of data occurred under very different weather conditions.

Several participants express interest in determining the benefits obtained for the cost of building central sewer plants. Jeff Chanton suggests that caffeine could be used as a tracer of human wastewater. Clay Tappan was involved in conversions to central sewer and is interested in the effect that such conversions have. David Carter mentions beach closures in Polk County due to an unknown source of pathogen indicators; when pathogen counts eventually decreased attention faded. Eberhard Roeder suggests that he could pursue grant funding for such a study in the coming year.

Clay Tappan motions and Patti Sanzone seconds to pursue a study to assess the effectiveness of converting onsite systems to central sewer. Motion is carried unanimously.

- b. Nutrient Removal: Eberhard Roeder had included with the invitation partial results from sampling in the Keys in 2000/2001. These data showed that NSF standards were frequently exceeded and large variability. In discussing the results, he suggested that this raises the issue of how to define compliance and that control of variability will be important in the Keys study of nutrient-removing systems. He expects to get more data on performance-based systems from Lee County, which will be the focus area for a second nutrient-removal study.
- c. Remote Sensing: Eberhard Roeder reports that EPA-Gulf of Mexico Program has not yet responded to the full proposal that was submitted to EPA in late September. There will be a possibility to cooperate with a Bureau of Water

project in Wakulla County that will employ the same on-the-ground method for detecting optical brighteners.

- d. Manatee Springs, Phase II: Eberhard Roeder reports that implementation of nutrient-removal at Magnolia II has been slowed down by delays in determining the maintenance entity for the installed aerobic treatment unit by the Park Service. Current plans for Hickory are to obtain an attached-growth system. David Collins signs out. Eberhard Roeder suggests including the writing of a summary of phase I as journal article manuscript as one task into the contract for phase II. Upon some generally supportive discussion, questions about the magnitude of cost arise. Eberhard Roeder estimates that between eight and ten thousand dollars should provide for enough salary time for Harmon Harden to achieve the task. This money would come out of the Onsite Sewage Research Fund, because the EPA-grant does not include such a task. John Heber motions and Kevin Sherman seconds to include such an amount for the purposes of publishing the results of Phase I in a peer reviewed journal. Motion is unanimously approved.
 - e. Other: Mark Hooks reports on a project under development with the Bureau of Water Programs to sample private wells along the Suwannee River for nitrates. Such a project was prompted by the observation of high nitrate values at the river-front site at Manatee Springs. In order to keep the drainfield out of the flood plain, some homeowners install their drainfield on the high side of the property and their well lower, between the drainfield and the river. Thus, the drinking water wells appear likely to be impacted by nitrates.
5. Public Comment: nothing to report
 6. Other: The next meeting is planned. By general agreement, an in-person meeting is tentatively scheduled for April 2005 in the general Polk County area to allow an in-depth discussion of research program priorities. Eberhard Roeder suggests the possibility of a teleconference call in January if needed for updates.
In response to questions about reappointments to the committee necessitated by expiring terms, Eberhard Roeder reports that John Heber has been reappointed as Consumer Representative, and the Bureau has requested nominations from the Florida Restaurant Association. The State University System is not currently represented.
Patricia Sanzone motions and John Heber seconds to adjourn. The meeting is adjourned at 10:35.

Recorded by Eberhard Roeder