



OSSF Workgroup

April 27, 2010 2:00 PM

Workgroup Members Present: Martin Entringer (GCHD), Bruce Lesikar (Texas A&M), and Lisa Miller-Marshall (GBF)

Discussion: Bruce Lesikar reported that one of the biggest issues in dealing with OSSFs is the fact that most people and public officials do not believe that septic systems contribute to bacteria in the Bay. Before policies can be developed or changed regarding the issue of malfunctioning septic systems, the public must first be made aware of the issues and understand that there is a problem. Some of the issues that need to be addressed to improve the problems with the septic systems are:

1. Up-front costs for the systems are only part of the costs. Most people install inferior systems because the initial installation costs are low. Unfortunately, most homeowners do not take into account the operation and maintenance costs of their system when they are deciding which type and manufacturer to use. Inferior systems break down more frequently. A system that is better quality may cost more initially but malfunctions less often. Generally, the costs for better systems can be recovered in 5-6 years.
2. Public officials will not support initiatives that create more cost to the homeowners until there is a large scale grass roots effort to inform the public about how important this issue is. We need policies requiring maintenance and permitting but that will not happen without data linking the waste from the OSSFs to bacteria in the Bay.
3. Septic systems need to be correctly designed for the lifestyle of the homeowner.
4. Three messages that Bruce believes are extremely important for the public to understand:
 - The soils have to be unsaturated in order for pathogens to be removed
 - Septic tanks need to be pumped at some frequency
 - If no disinfection is used, you are not disinfecting the waste water
5. Need to figure out the best method to reach the homeowners with information and education.

Next meeting: May 26, 2010 at 9:30 AM