

Improving your Water Quality in Dollars and Sense

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Overview of Presentation

Background

Stormwater

- County funded programs
 - Citizens Drainage Program
 - Storm drain marking
- Citizen financed efforts

Septic Tanks

- Maintain vs replace (costs)
- Money for repairs
- Switching to public sewer

Background

Stormwater

- Definition:
 - Rainfall that **flows** over your yards, streets, parking lots etc. to a stream
 - This water does **NOT** go to a treatment facility
- Why should we care? Problems with the:
 - Quantity of water
 - Quality of the water

Stormwater Affects ...

- Flooding
- Property value (waterfront property)
- Drinking water treatment (higher costs)
- Recreation (fishing, swimming, boating)
- Food sources (like clams and oysters)
- Industries (recreational, shellfish)

Septic Tanks

- Function:
 - Provide a means of treating household waste for those areas that do not have access to public sewer or where sewerage is not feasible
- Failure linked to stormwater problems

Private Septic vs Public Sewer

- Which one are you on?
 - Call (404) 508-7900 to find out (DeKalb County Board of Health)

Stormwater

BMPs

- Best Management Practices (BMPs)
- A practice or structure that controls run-off etc. to improve stormwater quality
- Examples: Ponds for detaining or retaining water, filters etc.
- These can look attractive, but may have this functional value too

BMP Maintenance

- Unmaintained BMPs will fail, eventually
- Who pays for maintenance?
 - Probably depends on where the BMP is located
- How much does maintenance cost?
 - Depends on the type of BMP

Cost of BMP Maintenance

- For ponds, O&M costs are related to **initial cost to create the BMP**
 - Example: for dry detention pond, O&M is about 4% of the “capital cost”
- Cost is also linked to the **storage capacity**
 - Example: for a pond that is **more than** 100,000 cubic feet, O&M is about 1% of the “capital cost”
 - For a pond that is **less than** 100,000 cubic feet, O&M is about 5% of the “capital cost”

Planning for Funding

- Costs can be high
- Costs involve
 - regular maintenance, and
 - non-routine events
- For regular maintenance costs:
 - e.g. removing sediment from a pond every 5 years
 - Each year, collect 20% of the total cost
 - If, cost to remove sediment = \$1,000; collect \$200 every year
- Another fund is also recommended as a “rainy day” plan (one-time fee?)

Where Will the Money Come From?

- Homeowner Association fees – common
- The County's Citizens Drainage Program (CDP)
 - a property owner may request drainage pipes and/or rubble rock up to a value of \$2,500 (about 50 tons of rock)
 - County needs to inspect and approve first
 - If provided, follow-up and maintenance are the responsibility of the homeowner

Other Challenges with BMPs

- Mosquitoes -
 - Most well-designed BMPs are not major mosquito producers
 - Poorly designed or maintained BMPs can create serious mosquito problems
- Unruly vegetation (*and critters*)

Septic Tanks

Cost of Septic Maintenance

SEPTIC

- Pumping out 1,000 gallon tank - **\$275 to \$350**
 - Should be done every 3-5 years
 - **Per year cost = \$80**
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Difference = \$150 per year

Compared to:

PUBLIC SEWER

- Public Sewer: \$3.22 per 1,000 gallons
- Average household uses about 6,000 gallons per month
- Per month for sewer = \$19.30
- **Per year for sewer = \$232.00**

Cost of Repairing a failed system

- \$3,000 and \$5,000 but, ...
- can cost as much as \$10,000 to \$15,000
- Most common repair is replacement of drainage field:
 - \$17 to \$22 per square foot of drain or leach field
 - a 3-bedroom home usually has a 150 square foot drain field
 - Repair charge would range from \$2,550 to \$3,300

Where will the money come from?

- Setting aside the “*extra*” \$150 per year
- A home-equity loan from the bank
- Homeowner “*insurance program*”

Advocate through “willingness to pay”

- DeKalb County Stormwater Utility
 - Fees are \$4.00 per month per single dwelling
 - Billed with annual taxes
- *“There is no such thing as a free lunch”*
- For government, raising fees/establishing new fees are **not** popular activities

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