

SEPTAGE STUDY GROUP MEETING MINUTES

Date: August 22, 2017

Time: 9:00am – 3:00pm

Location: Dane County UW Extension Office, Madison, WI

Next Meeting: TBD

Attendees

Group Members	Guests
Corey Bowen, WI Liquid Waste Carriers	Jon Bischel, citizen
Bill Dyer, Herzog-Dyer Excavating & Sanitation	Tammy Bischel, citizen
Fred Hegeman, DNR	Brian Cunningham, Sauk County
Alexis Heim, DNR	Steve Geis, DNR
Emily James, DNR	Jason Knutson, DNR
Brad Johnson, DSPS POWTS Program	Danielle Luke, DNR
George Klaetsch, Klaetsch Public Affairs Strategies	Nancy Mistele, DOA Business Development
Joe Knilans, DOA Business Development	Al Morrison, citizen
Chris Olson, WI County Code Adm	Pat Stevens, DNR
Mallory Palmer, DNR	Adrian Stocks, DNR
Sue Porter, DATCP	
Dale Stanford, Stanford's Septic Service	
Megan Taylor, Cans to Go	
Jim VandenBrook, WI Land & Water Cons	

Absent: Aaron Ausen, WI Onsite Water Recyclers & Dan Bahr, WI Counties Association

Meeting Summary

Introductions

Group members and guests provided introductions and background on their interest in the study group.

Scope & Goals – Pat Stevens, Environmental Management Division Administrator

Stevens thanked Study Group members for participating and briefly described the Department structure and how the septage program falls under the wastewater program. The Study Group concept was a product of the realignment efforts to focus on important work and how the department is managing resources. The role of this group is to advise the department on issues facing the industry so as to better understand what sort of efficiencies can be implemented through program policies or rule making.

Klaetsch asked for clarification on time commitment and duration of the study group.

Hegeman responded that the department is aiming for 2-4 meetings/year to get everyone up to speed with the same information; the study group will last as long as there are identified issues that can be addressed.

Taylor commented that everyone in the room may have their own list of priority topics but what are the department's top one or two priorities for the group? Hegeman responded that this group is an opportunity for the department to listen to the industry on needs. As an advisory group, the department will listen and take suggestions, but will also need to balance the resources of the department to make changes and develop priorities going forward.

Mistele asked if DNR will provide guidance on the best way to address topics and implement changes (e.g. administrative code versus statute changes). Stevens commented that there are different items that would need to be implemented through the statutes or even the EPA so the department will point out these avenues during discussions. Hegeman requested that others also assist in pointing out these differences when appropriate. Knilans commented that topics which require rule or code changes will take time so group members should keep this in mind during discussions.

Dyer commented that the length and commitment of the study group will depend on complexity and topics that arise during conversations.

WPDES Permit Program Overview – Jason Knutson, Wastewater Section Chief
(Presentation available online)

Knutson provided background and structure of the department and environmental management division. Within the division, the wastewater and permits sections work with septage industry for permits, licenses, and certifications. Initiatives following the alignment include focusing on core work, streamlining processes, and providing updated IT solutions where appropriate. Implementation of these initiatives is being guided by development of study groups (i.e. Septage, Permit Streamlining, and Aquatic Plant Management), and cross program integration.

Dyer commented during the regional contact slide of the presentation that the regional septage areas may be too large for one person to manage which impacts communication and customer service. Stanford added that in his area (Adams County) competition for land is increasing and operators are struggling to find disposal options so having more department resources available is important. Taylor added that the institutional knowledge available may be more important than the number of staff. Stevens suggested that having access to guidance and fact sheets could provide easier access to information with consistent answer across regions. Knilans suggested having a county contact as a "liaison" to the department to help with local questions. Hegeman explained that department staff typically relies on the local wardens for communication/follow up to complaints and NR 113 does provide counties to take on the septage program locally but none have done so at this time. Klaetsch offered that staff shortages and lack of understanding are two legs of a stool that are symptoms of complex code requirements and simplifying code/rules would alleviate some issues. Stevens

acknowledged these concerns and suggested this group may need to focus on these and coming forward with solution based ideas to assist the department.

Septage Program Overview – Fred Hegeman, Statewide Residuals Coordinator & Mallory Palmer, Operations Certification Coordinator (Presentation available online)

Hegeman provided an overview of the septage program roles in relation to allocating the 2.1 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) staff hours to compliance, enforcement, and education. The program is charged with implementing Wisconsin State Statutes 281.17, 281.48, 281.49 and following sections NR 113 and NR 114 Wisconsin Administrative Code. An overview of private onsite wastewater treatment systems disposal options, annual reporting requirements, and the public health concerns was provided. Palmer provided information on operator certification requirements and the department's role in providing continuing education (CE) credits. Time did not allow the department to discuss land application.

Knilians asked Palmer if business training credits could be used for general CE credits.

Palmer explained the process of approving general CE credits can be done by submitting the class outline or a justification of the applicability of a class in order to count towards CE credits. The department is continually accepting and looking for these other types of courses to be reviewed for approval.

Taylor commented that communication between the department and operators should be emphasized in order for operators to plan ahead and be aware of any changes to certification credits. Palmer explained there is a standard formula for determining credits based on hours of training.

Mistele commented that feedback during other small business meetings has been the applicability of trainings to the specific type of operation (i.e. Grade T or Portable Toilet only businesses are required to attend trainings focused on landspreading activities which is not how they dispose of septage).

Dyer mentioned the WI Liquid Waste Carriers Association is conducting the second round of testing nutrient content of septic tank residuals. The statewide study is a collaborative effort with UW – Stevens Point and assistance from the department. The purpose is to characterize septage wastes from various systems and household types in order to inform potential rule changes which impact landspreading operations and wastewater treatment facilities business decisions. Hegeman confirmed this study will provide accurate and confirmable data to advise potential changes in code requirements. Group members (Klaetsch, Stanford, Knilians) commented in support and optimism for this study.

Scope and Goals – Group Members

(Due to time constraints this topic not directly addressed but other discussions will reflect group input and needs from this group.)

Brainstorming – Group Members

Group members split into smaller groups to discuss topics of interest, goals of the group, and solution based ideas. The members were asked to write discussion topics on notecards and submit to the moderators for review and large group discussion. The notecards were roughly categorized and are summarized below (due to time constraints, larger group discussion on these items were tabled for a future meeting):

1. Code changes
 - a. Specific references in code for portable restroom businesses
 - b. Storage requirements and process for approval
 - c. Integrate codes and statutes more efficiently to minimize overlap and complexity
 - d. Change/Update/Add certification statement specifically for Grade T businesses
 - e. Simplify language for landspreading requirements
2. Staffing/Streamlining
 - a. One statewide contact to address or direct all questions/concerns
 - b. Utilize the department's Small Business Environmental Assistance Program
 - c. Establish "Authority Having Jurisdictions" or county delegated authority
3. Landspreading
 - a. Update application rates when UW – Stevens Point study shows to allow to increase loading rates
 - b. There is an increasing number of septic systems, but decreasing land available for spreading
 - c. Review of soil types based on interpretation and applicability of code
 - d. Nutrient management planning and septage pollutants
 - i. Medication, bleach, and detergents leaching in groundwater
 - ii. Addressing farmer concerns
4. Education/Training of Business Owners
 - a. Online classes for credit
 - b. Adding current issues, enforcement, or results of investigations to classes
 - c. Monthly webinars during off season of "hot topics"
 - d. Landspreading pathogen control
 - e. Tougher testing
 - f. Business education credits (Use of social media, promotion, e-forms, etc.)
 - g. Separating requirements/courses for Grade T and Grade L
 - h. Separating Grade T license to Portable Toilets & Other

Identify Information Needed / Questions & Comments – Fred Hegeman

Hegeman addressed questions that were provided prior to the meeting.

Taylor commented that open communication is essential between this group and the department because current feelings from the businesses are negative or hesitant to ask questions because enforcement may be brought against them. Johnson

suggested a future agenda topic on specifically how to communicate and reach out to industry with effective and consistent message to work together and address issues. Klaetsch echoed that the morning session with Stevens highlighted the need for consistent messaging and bridging the gap of interpreting code to “plain speak” but it is incumbent on the members and business owners to get the right information for their specific situation.

ADJORNED – Hegeman thanked the group members for participating and the time commitment for the group. The next meeting will be set up. Group members should look for a doodle poll soon to determine a date.

Summary of Ideas/Issues to Discuss for Future Meetings (also see above for Small Group Discussion Topics)

1. Disposal options for rural areas in which land spreading is not an option
2. Key ways to provide better resources to the industry as institutional knowledge of the septage program may be more important than the number of staff available
 - a. Potential guidance or information sheets provided to externals for further clarification of the code.
 - b. Potentially dedicate staff member as a specialist who visits businesses statewide to answer lingering questions
 - c. Potentially enlist county liaisons to act as an extension of the DNR
3. Allow for business course to count as Continuing Education credits for septage haulers
4. Modify the certification exams Tougher questions on the exams (WLWCA is willing to submit questions they would like to see on the exam)
5. Provide training material, fact sheets, etc. on the website
6. Septage Storage