

ACTION ITEM 8.5 – PRIVATE DECENTRALIZED WASTEWATER SYSTEMS ORDINANCE

ACTION ITEM

Adopt a local ordinance to manage the use of private decentralized wastewater systems.

OBJECTIVE

Establish requirements for the proper design and maintenance of private wastewater systems to protect human and environmental health.

DESCRIPTION OF MEASURE

A private decentralized wastewater system is defined as any privately owned wastewater collection, treatment or disposal system serving more than one residential lot or business, or which has a daily flow in excess of 2,000 gallons per day, or which transfers flows between more than one parcel or tract of land.

Local governments in coordination with local wastewater providers should determine the long-term community impact of decentralized systems and adjust long-term wastewater master plans accordingly (Action Item 9.1). Local governments (those who issue building permits) must either:

- Enact a local ordinance prohibiting private decentralized wastewater systems
- Enact a local ordinance establishing specific conditions for private decentralized wastewater systems

In selecting from these two options, each community should consider the long-term impacts of private decentralized wastewater systems on water quality, assimilative capacity, and on consumptive use. Private decentralized systems share some of the same challenges as septic systems in that if not properly operated and maintained they can impact water quality. When determining whether to allow private decentralized systems, local governments should consider the long-term impacts on existing and planned wastewater operations. Private decentralized systems are often required through the regulatory process to use land application or subsurface disposal methods for treated effluent. Such disposal methods may be considered a consumptive use and their impact on future water supplies should also be factored into the local ordinance decision.

Most of the jurisdictions in the Metro Water District have at one time or another relied upon small private decentralized wastewater treatment systems to establish sewer services. Some communities may view private decentralized systems as building blocks towards the long-term expansion of the wastewater collections system without requiring initial public funding or a community can choose to incorporate decentralized wastewater systems into the permanent portfolio of wastewater collection, treatment, and disposal alternatives.

Responsible Party

- Local Government
- Local Wastewater Provider
- Other: _____

In Coordination With

- Site Plan Review Staff
- Community Development/ Zoning
- Local Stormwater Program
- Local Wastewater Providers
- Local Water Provider
- County Board of Health
- Other: neighboring wastewater providers (where appropriate)

Section 8: SEPTIC SYSTEMS AND DECENTRALIZED SYSTEMS

If communities do allow private systems for this purpose, the local ordinance must reference minimum requirements for design, construction, ownership, and operation to protect public health and water quality. Technical specifications for the installation of private systems may also be included in the guidance document. The ordinance must require private systems to post an Operational Bond and have a Trust Indenture issued by the local jurisdiction issuing the land disturbance permit or the local wastewater provider. The Trust Indenture is an important aspect of the local ordinance, as it establishes the entity responsible for maintenance if the private owner is unable to perform. Several communities within the Metro Water District have inherited private wastewater facilities that were not properly maintained. The ordinance must also specify that the private system must obtain approval from Georgia EPD prior to construction.

Local governments must send a copy of their private wastewater system ordinance to Georgia EPD, Georgia DCA, and incorporate it into local wastewater master plans (Action Item 9.1). With the ordinance, Georgia EPD can evaluate permit requests from private service providers. Local wastewater providers with an ordinance in place as of March 2009 that addresses private wastewater management systems are considered to be in compliance with this action item and are not required to change their existing ordinance.

SPECIFIC SUB-TASKS

Sub-Task	Description
Adopt a private wastewater system ordinance	Adopt a private wastewater system ordinance that either prohibits private systems or provides technical specifications for these systems.
Provide a copy of the ordinance to Georgia EPD and Georgia DCA	Provide the ordinance to Georgia EPD and Georgia DCA and incorporate into local wastewater master plans.