



MEETING THE SEPTIC SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

Springs and Aquifer Protection Act

Each of the 13 adopted restoration plans (also known as Basin Management Action Plans, or BMAPs) will identify the sources of nitrogen pollution within the springshed. In certain springs near populated areas, the water leaking from septic systems is high in nitrogen, which enters the aquifer and emerges at nearby springs.

In areas where septic systems contribute more than 20 percent of nitrogen pollution to the springshed, the law requires the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to include a septic system remediation plan within the BMAP.

DEP is coordinating with the Florida Department of Health (DOH), local governments and wastewater utilities and septic system contractors on the development of the remediation plans. These plans will determine how much nitrogen pollution from septic systems must be reduced to protect the springs. Projects can include septic system enhancements to treat nitrogen pollution or wastewater system upgrades and service connections to municipal systems (removal and abandonment of conventional septic systems). DEP is also working with stakeholders to identify funding assistance opportunities to help implement these critical projects. In cases where specific projects have not yet been identified or proposed, DEP will continue to work with stakeholders to identify and implement basin-specific projects and strategies to achieve the necessary reductions.

The statute requires specific actions regarding both existing and new septic systems for homes located near impacted springs within what are known as Primary Focus Areas in the adopted BMAPs. These are targeted vulnerable areas, where septic systems pose the highest risk due to proximity to a spring and permeable soil conditions.

- Installation of new septic systems on lots of less than 1 acre within all Primary Focus Areas is prohibited unless the system includes enhanced treatment of nitrogen.
- Within the PFAs, connection to central sewer or replacement of existing septic systems with a new and enhanced system may be required.

The installation or replacement of an enhanced system in these areas will not be required if central sewer connection is planned by the local government and identified as a BMAP-listed project.

In anticipation of the next important step for addressing septic systems, many local governments have already taken advantage of available state cost-share assistance to upgrade their wastewater treatment facility capacity and treatment capabilities to expand central sewer connections. DEP will continue to make this funding assistance available.

Central sewer connection may not be the best or most feasible solution in some areas. DEP is working with the water management districts, DOH and local governments to develop grant programs to provide funding assistance directly to local homeowners. This funding will be available to homeowners to cover their costs for septic system enhancement or replacement in an effort to reduce nutrient impacts from septic systems in vulnerable spring areas.

Thanks to the continued commitment of Governor Scott and the Florida Legislature in securing a dedicated funding source for springs restoration and protection, DEP is able to assist local governments and homeowners to implement these projects that will reduce nutrients and produce real benefits for our spring systems.

You can find out if your home lies within a Primary Focus Area, a searchable map can be found by visiting FloridaDEP.gov/PFAMap.