



MEETING THE SEPTIC SYSTEM PERMITTING REQUIREMENTS

Springs and Aquifer Protection Act

In 2016, the Florida Legislature identified 30 “Outstanding Florida Springs” to receive additional protections to ensure their conservation and restoration for future generations. These protections will be outlined in restoration plans, known as Basin Management Action Plans (BMAPs), focused on reducing nitrogen pollution that is impacting the water quality of these springs.

Changes to Septic System Permitting

In springsheds where septic systems contribute more than 20 percent of pollution, or where DEP finds it necessary, the law requires DEP to include a septic system remediation plan within that spring’s BMAP.

The statute requires specific actions regarding both existing and new septic systems located near impacted springs within areas known as Priority Focus Areas (PFA). These are targeted vulnerable areas where pollution sources pose the highest risk due to proximity to a spring and permeable soil conditions. The following changes to septic permitting will take place within these PFAs:

- For new septic systems: Installation of new septic systems on lots of less than one acre is prohibited unless the system includes enhanced treatment of nitrogen as described in the septic system remediation plan. This applies to all new system permits issued after adoption of the BMAP (July 1, 2018). 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.
- For existing septic systems: The connection to central sewer or replacement of existing septic systems with a new and enhanced system may be required for existing failing septic tanks once a remediation plan has been approved.

DEP is coordinating with the Florida Department of Health (DOH), local governments, 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 tank enhancements to treat nitrogen pollution or wastewater system upgrades and service connections to municipal systems. In cases where specific projects have not yet been identified or proposed, DEP will continue to work with stakeholders to identify and implement the basin-specific projects and strategies to achieve the necessary reductions.

Thanks to the continued commitment of Governor Scott and the Florida Legislature in securing a dedicated funding source for springs restoration and protection, DEP and DOH are able to assist local governments and homeowners with grant funding 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 PFA by visiting FloridaDEP.gov/PFAMap, and contact DOH for information on available funding for homeowners. In areas that are connecting to central sewer, DEP and the water management districts will continue to provide funding to the local utilities to offset a portion of homeowner connection costs.