

**SEPTIC TANK PUMPERS ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
APRIL 11, 2008 MEETING MINUTES**

CALL TO ORDER

The Septic Tank Pumpers Advisory Committee meeting was called to order on April 11, 2008 at 12:15 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Don Heimbigner, Don's Septic Service;
Barbara Woodbury, Sanders County Sanitarian;
Conrad Eckert, Eckert Services;
Wade Stout, Badger Pass Septic Service;
Renai Hill, Montana DEQ.

OTHERS PRESENT:

Marilyn Klasan, Klasan Septic;
Jerry Bennett, JMF Services;
Kelly Brown, Brown's Septic Service, Inc;
Dale Brown, Brown's Septic Service, Inc;
C. Eckert, Eckert Services;
Betty Heimbigner, Don's Septic Service;
Frank Laverell, Laverell's, Inc;
Barbara Kingery, Montana DEQ/Public Water;
Bob Smith, Montana DEQ/Enforcement;
Darrell Stankey, Montana DEQ/Solid Waste;
Rick Thompson, Montana DEQ/Solid Waste.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FOR SEPTEMBER 7, 2007 MEETING

Conrad Eckert (Acting Chairman) asked for any changes to the draft minutes. A motion to approve the September 2007 minutes was made by Don Heimbigner and seconded by Conrad Eckert and Wade Stout. The motion carried and the September 7, 2007 minutes were approved.

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

1. *Request for legal ruling on graywater, installers, fire camps, pumpers etc.*
Renai Hill stated that the Department worked with Peg Geiger at the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) on the fire season contract for graywater and the weed washer station. Pumpers will be required to provide a copy of their current Montana Septic Pumper License and vehicle inspection form. The issue of the weed wash station being graywater has been corrected. The waste from this station is car wash sump waste and must be handled according to the rules. The question was raised how to handle the sump waste. Pumpers can take the waste to their approved disposal site listed on their license, or to a site approved by BLM/Forest Service, or a site identified by the county sanitarian. If it is a site not on their license a permission slip will need to be signed and maintained by the pumper.

Conrad Eckert stated there are still problems with the Forest Service Contract. He read a letter regarding a two sink bid contract. There is a problem as to who can pump the graywater units (sinks, showers, laundry units) and portable toilets. The group discussed the problems they have encountered at fire camps on this issue. Renai stated that she would call the Forest Service and discuss the issue.

Barbara Kingery, (Public Water Supply Section), addressed the group regarding the status of the new graywater system rules. She explained that their definition of graywater is different than that at fire camps and may vary from each Department. Household graywater is the laundry waste, sink and shower waste. A rule change request has been drafted and now they are working on what the rules will state. Graywater will only be able to be subsurface discharge from a separate graywater tank installed at a residence. Conrad Eckert asked if a pumper pumps the graywater tank is it handled as blackwater. The answer was yes, if a pumper is called to pump the tank it would be handled as black water. The question was raised about pathogens in the graywater from fecal matter in the bath water or laundry. Barbara stated the definition in the rules will clearly define this. It will also be the responsibility of the home owner to monitor this and why it can only be subsurface discharged to rose bushes, etc. but to nothing eatable. Barbara stated they hope to have the drafted rules ready by January 2009 for the Legislators.

2. Advertising the pumper program, riser lids etc.

Don Heimbigner stated that the pumpers are not getting the County Sanitarian representation needed and even if the Department provides pumper program information there is no guarantee that the Sanitarians would read it. Barbara Woodbury stated that she plans to get on the conference agenda for MEHA this fall to discuss septic pumpers.

The group discussed riser lids and problems associated with them. Some installers fail to put in screws or use the wrong ones. If risers are broken or damaged some home owner's state they don't want them fixed or don't have money to fix them. Other home owners state they don't want a riser. The question was asked how much does it cost for a riser and one pumper stated they run from \$12.00 to \$30.00. This does not include installation such as digging to find the opening, etc. A retro fit for an old system would be about \$90.00 (this can vary) and some pumpers have a payment system. The group asked how they can get the word out. Joe Meeks from (Planning Prevention & Assistance/Source Water Protection) put on a training seminar for homeowners in each county and may cover this. Renai stated she would talk with him and find out if they have brochures on risers and safety issues etc. The group stated this would be a good handout for them to give to home owners.

The group discussed how to educate the public on the requirements of pumping their septic systems. Many home owners have never had their systems pumped which violate the Water Quality Act because if the drain field fails, wells and state waters are polluted. The question was raised why doesn't Montana have mandatory pumping of septic tanks as does many other states. Barbara Woodbury and the group discussed and indicated this was something that the state needed to look at. Renai stated this is a local government issue. The local government inspects and certifies the systems as they are built and it would be up to those same agencies to pose any further inspections or pumping requirements. Toole County had mandatory pumping at one time, but due to the complaints to the County Commissioners it's no longer in place. Realtors are selling properties with failing drain fields and or tanks not being pumped, etc. Darrell Stankey recommended that the Committee members talk with MACO and see if

they will work up a bill to mandate septic maintenance, etc. The group requested that MACO be contacted and attend our next meeting to discuss issues they face as septic tank pumpers.

3. Annual fee and late fee increase.

This is an issue the committee recommended during the September 2007 SPAC meeting. Renai stated that after she sent out the meeting agenda she received several calls from pumper businesses against any fee increase. Conrad Eckert stated that an increase would provide additional money for education and enforcement. Frank Laverell stated if there is an increase he would like to see more of the fee going to the county sanitarians versus the Department hiring an additional person. Conrad also stated the advantages to the last fee increase: pumper businesses now receive training, better support from the Department, and it has made the overall pumper business more professional.

The group began discussing the dwindling number of land application sites. The group indicated that it is getting harder and harder for the pumpers to dispose of their pumpings. Wastewater treatment facilities can not handle the waste and every year they are losing land to subdivisions. The question was asked if the Department/State could procure property for them to dispose of their pumpings. Renai stated that at this time this is the responsibility of the pumper business to procure a disposal site. Other options were discussed.

The question was posed regarding dewatering systems and could the state put something like this in for them. Renai stated that this would be a private business operation and not something the State would undertake. The group discussed dewatering systems and what they entailed. The question was asked if the State could tell waste water treatment plants (WWTP) to accept the liquids from the dewatering systems. This can only be approved by the WWTP accepting the liquid waste since they know what is needed to maintain their systems.

Some landfills also have land application sites and or will accepted dewater sewage sludge so this is an option for some businesses.

4. Enforcement Update.

Bob Smith informed the group that Enforcement has not received a lot of STP complaints. The group discussed complaints, unlicensed pumpers, and violation fees. Bob briefed the group on the manning status of Enforcement. Members voiced their concerns regarding complaints called in by other pumpers. Bob informed the group that anyone calling a complaint into the Department can remain anonymous. Enforcement would need to know the problem/violation, the business name of the violator and as much information as possible about that business.

5. Review January 2008 Training Conference Critique.

Renai provided copies of the critique results from the training conference. Members discussed training topics for next year. Members were asked to come up with suggestions for next years training by the next meeting.

6. General Topics

Renai provided a copy of the current list of licensed pumpers. Don Heimbigner stated that he would like to see pumpers who pay their fees and are licensed to be treated fairly. There are pumper businesses operating without a license all over the state of Montana. Licensed

pumpers have to compete with unlicensed pumpers. If by being licensed and following the rules is causing him to lose business plus being required to pay licensing fees and nothing is being done to those businesses not following the rules, or paying fees, or obtaining a license why should he. He does not feel as a licensed pumper he should act as police for those that are not. What is the State doing? Also, he stated that there is a lack of support from County Sanitarians in the counties where these unlicensed pumpers are conducting business. The group discussed businesses in the state that they know are operating without a license. The group provided names of several pumper businesses to Bob as doing business without a license: Patrick Construction, Missoula Septic Service, Inc., Big Creek Portables, and Sorlie's Septic Service.

Bob Smith (Enforcement) and Renai Hill (Solid Waste) are the only two working the Septic Pumper Program and need assistance from all individuals to help monitor the program. The fastest way for the Department to be aware of businesses in violation of the rules is to be contacted by pumpers, sanitarians, or the public.

The question was raised about those businesses on the list for 2007 that are not on the list for 2008. Those missing should be red flagged. Renai explained that those not on the list have been contacted by mail and phone prior to being removed from the list. If the unlicensed business states they have sold or closed their business and are later found to still be conducting business then Enforcement gets involved.

A member of the group complained that the rules have no teeth and that's why so many individuals pump without a license. The group discussed the rules. A member present stated that the Department should not make it so hard/difficult for the pumpers by making more rules etc. and or by nit picking over every little thing.

Barbara Woodbury (County Sanitarian) explained her process when she receives complaints on unlicensed pumpers conducting business. She also stated that it can be difficult for those sanitarians that are responsible for several counties.

Members suggested rotating the location of the quarterly meetings. The meeting could be held once a year in eastern or western Montana.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Confirm next meeting date

The next meeting will be held on June 13, 2008.

2. Agenda items for next meeting

- Educating the public.
- Fee increase.
- 2009 Training topics
- MACO

Conrad Eckert adjourned the meeting at 2:22 p.m.