



Wastewater Working Group

- Introduction -

October 4, 2006

Butte County Public Health Department, Environmental Health Division

- Introduce staff
- Discuss organization chart

Statutory Authority

- The Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act vests in the Regional Board the authority to regulate discharges into the waters of the State. The act allows the Regional Board to require a discharger to file a report of the discharge with the Regional Board.
- The Regional Board issues waivers for individual sewage disposal systems in counties having ordinances that meet the Basin Plan and its Guidelines. As long as a county has adopted an ordinance compatible with the Regional Board's Basin Plan Guidelines, the county is allowed to be the permitting agency and the individual discharger does not need to file a report with the Regional Board.
- Basin Plan Guidelines require 5 feet of useable soil between the bottom of the disposal trench and an impermeable layer of soil or seasonal perched watertable. Strict adherence to this standard would severely limit development in Butte County.
- In the 1980s, Butte County negotiated less stringent standards than those found in the Basin Plan Guidelines. These standards currently referenced as Appendix 7 in Butte County Code, Chapter 22, Subdivision Ordinance.
- Because the reduced standards were codified in Chapter 22 without being cross referenced in Chapter 19 that governs septic system siting and design on existing parcels, secondary dwellings have been approved on existing parcels with site conditions that do not meet the minimal site conditions established by agreement with the Regional Board.
- Communication with Regional Water Quality Control Board staff reaffirms their expectation that the standards presented in Appendix 7 are meant to apply to all on-site wastewater systems.

Questa Program Evaluation

- The Departments of Public Health and Public Works presented a report to the Board of Supervisors in October of 2004 recommending that outside consulting services be used in the development of on-site wastewater policies and standards to address, at a minimum; (a) Compliance with AB 885 by the year 2009, (b) Oversight of system operation, maintenance and replacement, (c) Establishment of one or more regional sanitation districts, and (d) Cost recovery for program activities.
- Butte County Public Health Department entered into a contract with Questa Engineering in June of 2005 to perform this work. The consultant interviewed staff and held a series of public/community meetings for additional input.

- The Final Report was presented to and accepted by the Board of Supervisors on June 13, 2006, and staff presented a draft plan for implementation of the recommendations at the August 8, 2006 Board meeting.

Program Objectives and Timeline

- Establish wastewater working group
- Draft wastewater ordinance and manual
- Provide for staff training and certification
- Sponsor regular regional training events
- Development on ordinance for wastewater ponds
- Establish a countywide sanitation district
- See timeline

Major Policy Areas for Committee Review

- Permit processes
 - Textural evaluation v.s. percolation test
 - Designer certification requirements
 - Renewable operating permit
 - Compare various models and select most appropriate model for Butte County
- Process for appeals and variances
- Minimum land use siting requirements (creation of new parcels)
 - Minimum lot size
 - Maximum slope
 - Range of allowable soil textures and/or percolation rates
- Minimum on-site wastewater system siting requirements
 - Vertical separation
 - Slope
 - Soil texture and/or percolation rates
 - Setbacks
- System design requirements
 - Daily flow
 - Septic tank sizing
 - Alternative and supplemental treatment system requirements
- Installation requirements
 - Materials
 - Inspections
- Operation and Maintenance Program

Communication

- Environmental health web page
- Monthly updates of draft ordinance and manual
 - New file name each month
 - Underline and cross-out from previous month, all other changes accepted
 - Email to working group at least one week prior to next meeting
- Monthly report to Development Services User's Group