

Information regarding a proposed Operating Permit Program for Large Underground Wastewater Disposal Systems

The Division of Water Quality is considering a program to require an Operating Permit for wastewater disposal systems including lagoons, land applications sites and Large Underground Wastewater Disposal System. This paper is intended to provide potential permittees with information regarding the background, general requirements, the need and advantages of such a program for Large Underground Wastewater Disposal systems.

By definition these large systems typically consists of a building sewer, a septic tank and a subsurface disposal system with daily flows ranging from 5,000 gallons to 15,000 gallons or more. Currently, there are approximately 95 of these large systems in the state of Utah. They have proven to be very effective for establishments and small subdivisions with low daily flow because of low construction and operating costs. They work well as long as they are not over used and they are maintained.

Often, little or no maintenance is performed on these systems, as they are buried out of sight. When corrections or replacement of the entire disposal system is made, little examination is conducted to the real cause. In our review and experience, lack of maintenance or over-use are the main causes of system failure. Just performing simple maintenance like checking the septic tank and pumping it out when necessary, could avoid these more costly repairs.

For these reasons, the Division of Water Quality is proposing a basic Operating Permit program to monitor and report on the operation and condition of these large underground systems. Currently there is no statewide permit program for large underground systems, like there is for facilities that discharge to surface waters. Additionally, for those counties or health districts who wish to be more involved, we would allow them to manage this part of the program, and issue these operating permits and charge a fee to cover their costs.

The components of the Operating Permit program would be:

- ✓ A renewable permit issued by DWQ, the county or health district to operate and maintain a large underground system.
- ✓ Establish minimum levels of periodic monitoring of operation and maintenance parameters.
- ✓ Obtain periodic reporting of that monitoring data.

The advantages of this program to communities would be:

- ✓ To avoid unnecessary repair or replacement costs by establishing simple maintenance and monitoring to the system.
- ✓ To provide communities with valuable data to allow long-term planning efforts
- ✓ A stakeholders group will participate in making state rules for the program.

The Division of Water Quality is seeking feedback from communities regarding the feasibility of such a program. For comments please contact David Snyder at 801-538-9218 or dsnyder@utah.gov .