

Newsletter Article for Townships



Franklin County and its 17 townships are co-permittees to a municipal separate storm sewer system (MS4) storm water permit issued by Ohio EPA under the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES). What this means is that many local governments that manage a storm sewer system to convey rainwater (storm water) from roads and property to streams, ponds or rivers must meet certain requirements to assure that the community's rivers and streams are not polluted by anything entering this system of ditches and pipes.

One of the requirements of the permit is for the local government, in this case Franklin County and the townships, to develop a Storm Water Management Program, which outlines how they plan to protect water quality by reducing pollutants discharged from the MS4. There are six minimum control measures (MCM) that must be included in the program. These are: 1) Public Education and Outreach on Storm Water Impacts, 2) Public Involvement/Participation, 3) Illicit Discharge Detection and Elimination, 4) Construction Site Storm Water Runoff Control, 5) Post-Construction Storm Water Management in New Development and Redevelopment, and 6) Pollution Prevention/Good Housekeeping for Municipal Operations.

In September and October, Franklin County Public Health (formerly Board of Health) and Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District are hosting four regional community meetings to discuss MCM 3, Illicit Discharge Detection and Elimination (IDDE), with the landowners and residents of unincorporated Franklin County.

“Illicit discharge detection and elimination” refers to finding what is being discharged from ditches and storm sewers, other than rainwater, determining its sources and stopping it. As the storm sewer pipes are interconnected and out of sight, this is a daunting task.

A significant source of illicit discharges across the United States, Ohio and Franklin County are household sewage treatment systems (HSTS). You may know HSTS by the names septic system or aerator. HSTS are used when there is no access to a community sewage treatment system and all wastewater generated in a home must be treated onsite.

Septic systems use a septic tank and leach field, which uses naturally occurring soil bacteria to clean wastewater as it is absorbed in the soil. Solids stay in the septic tank that homeowners should clean every three years, or as needed. Because of small lot sizes, bedrock close to the surface or poor soil absorption rates, septic systems with leach fields are often not feasible. In the 1960s, the wastewater treatment industry believed they found a solution to these problems in aerator systems, which discharge treated wastewater through a discharge pipe connected to a storm sewer system or directly to a stream or river. Aerators require a motor to create air bubbles that help bacteria absorb organic matter and nutrients in the aeration tank, which the homeowner must also clean of solids periodically.

Unfortunately, older aerator or discharging systems have an extremely high failure rate and have been shown to contribute nitrogen, bacteria, and pathogens to local rivers and

streams. Sometimes this failure can be traced to inadequate maintenance practices, turning off the electricity to the system, or simply the age of the system. Whatever the cause of failure, the result can be a public health nuisance from contaminated rivers, streams, ponds or drinking water supplies.

These public health nuisances are being identified through the IDDE program and will be eliminated through a prioritized plan that will be discussed at the community meetings. The meetings will also cover the NPDES permit and requirements, future requirements of homeowners with failed or failing aeration systems, current problems in storm water quality and the need for water quality improvement. Please note the location and time of the four regional meetings and plan to attend one convenient to you.

For more information, visit www.myfcph.org and click on NPDES Phase II Storm Water Permit under Popular Links. To report a failing HSTS, call (614) 525-HSTS (4787). You can also contact Mary Ann Brouillette at Franklin Soil and Water at (614) 486-9613 or mbrouillette@franklinswcd.org.

Community Meetings

Southwest (Franklin, Jackson, Pleasant and Prairie Townships)

Tuesday, September 20 from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. at Jackson Township Administrative Building, 3756 Hoover Road, Grove City, OH 43123.

Southeast (Hamilton, Madison and Truro Townships)

Thursday, September 29 from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. at Madison Township Community Center, 4575 Madison Lane, Groveport, OH 43125.

Northwest (Brown, Clinton, Norwich, Perry, Sharon and Washington Townships)

Thursday, October 6 from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. at Washington Township Administration Building, 6200 Eiterman Road, Dublin, OH 43016.

Northeast (Bledon, Jefferson, Mifflin and Plain Townships)

Wednesday, October 19 from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. at Blendon Township Senior Center, 6330 S. Hempstead Road, Westerville, OH 43081.