DEP INFORMATION SHEET

Site Evaluation Guidance Attachment for Overboard Discharge System Replacements

Updated: February 13, 2006 **Contact:** (207) 287-3901

Prior to the submission of an application to the Department for renewal of an overboard discharge (OBD) license/permit, OR prior to transfer of a property containing a licensed/permitted OBD system, the licensee/permittee or transferor shall determine the feasibility of replacing the OBD system with a subsurface wastewater disposal system. When considering alternatives to the OBD, a Licensed Site Evaluator (LSE) with experience in designing systems for the replacement of OBD systems shall evaluate the feasibility of installing a subsurface system or technologically proven alternative to the OBD that conforms to the Subsurface Waste Water Disposal Rules (Rules) administered by the Maine Department of Health and Human Services – Division of Environmental Health (DEH). (The Rule is codified at 10 CMR Chapter 241 and may be accessed through the DEH website at: http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/eng/plumb/.) This document provides guidance for property owners and for LSEs performing site evaluations to determine whether an alternative to a particular OBD discharge exists.

A. Subsurface System Installations. Many OBD systems were installed on small lots or lots with soil conditions that did not meet criteria of the Rules at the time the systems were constructed. The rules governing subsurface wastewater disposal have changed since many of these OBD systems were installed and new technologies are now available that provide more opportunity for subsurface disposal than were available at the time the OBDs were initially installed.

One task of the LSE is to determine whether a subsurface wastewater disposal system can be installed on land owned or controlled by the waste discharge licensee / permittee with or without a variance. For purposes of determining whether a subsurface system can be installed to replace the OBD with or without a variance, the LSE shall evaluate the following options.

1) **Wastewater Loading Reduction.** Certain measures can be taken to reduce the quantity of wastewater requiring treatment, which may allow a reduction in the subsurface system sizing requirements. The LSE shall determine whether practices to reduce the quantity of raw wastewater can be applied.

2) **Pretreatment Devices**. If the combined Biochemical Oxygen Demand (BOD) and Total Suspended Solids (TSS) strength of the wastewater entering a subsurface system is reduced through pretreatment devices, the required disposal area may be reduced by as much as half the size of a system designed for normal strength wastewater. Two or more septic tanks operated in series, aerated septic tanks, septic tank outlet filters, and rotating biological contactors (RBCs) are some examples of pretreatment devices or practices that may result in reduced BOD and TSS strength. The removal of garbage grinders may also reduce organic loading and system sizing requirements. The LSE shall determine whether pretreatment techniques or devices authorized for use by the Rules can be installed to reduce the subsurface disposal system sizing requirements.

3) **Proprietary Systems/Devices.** There are several proprietary systems and devices that allow a reduction in the required minimum wastewater disposal area. These include concrete disposal devices, plastic disposal devices and gravel-less cloth fabric disposal tubing. These options need to be evaluated to determine if a smaller disposal system can be installed on the property.

4) **Split Flows and Site-Specific System Design.** The LSE shall determine whether the required subsurface disposal system area can be reconfigured to fit within the property dimensions by separating the waste streams. For example, the construction of a separate laundry disposal system may reduce the quantity of wastewater conveyed to the main treatment system. Splitting the wastewater flow between two or more leachfields, drip-irrigation sites, or other disposal areas may facilitate the disposal of wastewater where a single large disposal system cannot be sited. In certain cases, drip-irrigation systems can be configured in a manner that addresses the unique shape of a parcel of land or can be installed between trees or over/around obstacles (rocks, ledge) and may allow use of areas not previously considered for the application of wastewater.

5) **Setback Reductions.** In some situations, it may be possible to obtain a setback release from a neighboring property owner which would allow a system to be installed. When setback requirements are limiting on a particular site, the LSE shall evaluate the feasibility of siting a disposal system using reduced setback distances and setback variances.

6) **Easements for Disposal.** The LSE shall determine whether adjoining or nearby land may be used for wastewater disposal with the permission of the property owner(s). The LSE shall document efforts to obtain easement(s) from neighbors when, in the LSE's judgment, an easement would allow for the installation of a replacement system.

B. Other Disposal Options.

1) **Public Sewers.** There have been numerous extensions to public sewer systems since many OBD systems were initially installed. The LSE shall determine if connection to a public sewer is an option for the property. This may require an easement across another property or right-of-way.

2) **Spray Irrigation.** In certain circumstances on larger lots, it may be possible to apply wastewater to the land via spray irrigation. Generally, spray irrigation would not be a practical alternative for single family residences or small lots. However, the land area used for spray irrigation may have fewer intrinsic limitations than the site requirements used for subsurface wastewater disposal or drip-irrigation methods. Applications for spray irrigation disposal areas require DEP approval. The Department may request that a person seeking to renew or transfer an OBD license/permit evaluate the feasibility of spray irrigation as an alternative to the OBD system.

C. Information Required for Renewal and Transfer Applications. Applicants for a Waste Discharge License renewal or transfer must submit as part of their application to the Department a copy of the completed site evaluation report, including, but not limited to, all relevant sections of the HHE-200 Form. When applicable, the LSE shall identify the condition(s) and the sections(s) or provision(s) of the Rules that prohibit installation of a system with or without a variance.

D. DEP Contact Information. For more information or questions regarding this matter please contact the Department.

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