

Water Quality Technical Meeting
Fecal Coliform Tests and Trends
3 March 2011 9 AM - 3 PM
Summary

Attendees (Florida DEP Lee Banks and Pat O'Connor, Georgia EPD Jeremy Smith and Alice Vick, US FWS Heath Raschenberger, Coastal Georgia Water Council Roger Weaver, UFL Hollie Hall and Chad Bickerton, UGA Katie Sheehan, SMRMC Merrill Varn and Winifred Stephenson)

History of Coliform Results and Map of Current Fecal Coliform Impaired Segments - Hollie Hall, PhD candidate, University of Florida
Four impaired creeks Deep Creek Nassau Cty FL, Cornhouse and Spanish Creeks Charlton Cty GA, Horsepen Creek Camden Cty GA)

Discussion of Sampling and Trends

Data Collection Sites and Date/Frequency Map:

Main stem seems to adequately dilute present trib impairments, need to address tribs not main stem

Trend Analysis:

Total coliform tested until late 1990s

Fecal coliform tested beginning in 1970s so no reason to use total coliform

No other tests have been used by either state

Should be comparable across state lines , Florida uses a membrane filtration method shortened to Millipore while

Georgia uses a dilution count method called MPN; both methods are EPA approved

Impairment/Regulation Disconnect

Human Waste: Septic System Regulations that impact surface water in Georgia and Florida – Katie Sheehan, Attorney, River Basin Center, University of Georgia –

Same current main stem setback, Florida has historically had greater vertical and horizontal separations and has greater separations required on tributaries. Georgia set at 100' for main stem rivers by state. On both sides of the river there are many systems that are within 25' of the bank and with only 6" separation from the water table.

Results of "Septic Think Tank" four County Questionnaire- Merrill Varn, St. Marys River Management Committee-

Neither Florida nor Georgia, and none of the four counties, regulate inspection or pumpout. Only Baker County seems to treat all of its septage. The other counties truck septage outside of the county for treatment. Florida will no longer allow land application of septage beginning in 2016. All county health departments agreed that pumpout critical and suggested numerous methods to get the word out. No counties had either public or private entities with maintenance contracts for conventional septic systems.

Agricultural Animal Waste: Disposal Regulations that impact surface water in Georgia and Florida- **Chad Bickerton, J.D. candidate, University of Florida** –

Both state permit CAFO's (1000 cattle). Both states have best management practices for smaller operations (300-1000). Neither state said anything about 30 cows. NRCS has recommendations of filter strips alternative water supplies, composting strategies.

On-Site Waste Water Guidebook for Rural Counties- Katie Sheehan

Extensive guidebook which will be available online for use by rural counties. Huge amount of information about options and grant sources to achieve each option.

Florida Septic System Inspection Legislation- Chad Bickerton

Basically the inspection program is gutted. Both the House and Senate bills have eliminated evaluation program and de-funded the grant program to support it. The bills have passed the Health Regulation Committees and are being considered by the appropriations committees.

Discussion

5) What is the role of EPD/DEP in insuring that St. Marys River is not contaminated with human or animal waste?

Both states felt that DOH was not legally allowed to intervene unless there was a warranted complaint so protection of water bodies from failing or even failed systems was up to DNR. FL DEP proposed a system similar to the one used for the tributaries of the St. Johns River. Everyone agreed to at least collect the existing information and analyze tributaries with adequate data. Lee will send the XL spreadsheet with formulas to Jeremy Smith. Lee and Pat will also filter FL data to see which tributaries have adequate data. Each stream with enough data will be ranked in categories % over 200, 400, 800 and 5000. 100 units is considered pristine; 5000 units is considered definite anthropogenic causes. Florida has agreed to add another 40 samples basically two tributaries to their current samples. Jeremy will see what they can work into the Georgia schedule and budget but said he didn't think much would happen this year. Once the data is analyzed Jeremy, Lee, Pat and Heath will conference call to discuss the results. This step should be completed by September.

The highest ranked streams (in our cases the 303 streams) will be flagged for further investigation. Heath will accumulate the appropriate maps for a maps on the table meeting sometime in the Fall after the above conference call. Pat will get Merrill the list of people needed at the Maps on the table meeting. Once she has arranged an appropriate meeting date, the group will make an initial visual inspection and plan a future "walk the WBIDs" ground-truthing inspection to identify potential problems.

The group also discussed potential funding sources to remedy the problems.

6) Is the communication between EPD/DoHR and DEP/DoH optimal? Adequate? Need to discuss whether failed or failing systems will be reported to DOH.

Discussion of Periodic Water Quality Reports on the St. Marys River (225-240):

7) When does agency produce summary of Water Quality data or does data only appear in periodic impairment reports? Impairment only.

Discussed other possible sources of summary data. (Pat, Lee, Heath, and Jeremy will all send links to reports by other agencies. Doesn't look like there is much because there isn't much data.

8) If only appears in impairment reports, what recommendations should be made to SMRMC to produce periodic reports for counties?

Collect reports and summarize.