



# ONSITE SEWAGE PROGRAM TRANSFER OVERVIEW AND UPDATES

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# BACKGROUND

## INTERAGENCY AGREEMENT

- Consistent with the terms of the **2020 Clean Waterways Act**, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the Florida Department of Health (DOH) entered into an **Interagency Agreement Between the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and the Florida Department of Health in Compliance with the 2020 Clean Waterways Act for Transfer of the Onsite Sewage Program** (effective June 30, 2021).
- Under the Interagency Agreement, DOH's county health department (CHD) staff currently perform a range of direct service tasks (permitting, inspections, data management and tracking of onsite sewage treatment and disposal systems [OSTDS]) on DEP's behalf.
- This Interagency Agreement is set to expire on **June 30, 2026**.



# BACKGROUND

## INITIAL STAFF TRANSFERS

- On July 1, 2021, **DOH transferred to DEP** several dedicated OSTDS employees in Tallahassee and Orlando.
- This transfer included **12 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) OSTDS program positions** and an **additional two FTEs** to provide legal and administrative support to what is now referred to as DEP's Onsite Sewage Program (OSP) in the Division of Water Resource Management.
- These employees provide a range of OSTDS services, including rulemaking, programmatic guidance, licensing of septic tank contractors and businesses, approval of OSTDS components, research, public and local government training, technical support, variance reviews, program evaluations, tracking of septic tank contracting complaints and OSTDS training for certification.



# BACKGROUND

## STATEWIDE PERMITTING AND COMPLIANCE

### STATEWIDE PERMITTING BACKGROUND

- In calendar year (CY) 2023, DOH CHD employees issued approximately **64,000 OSTDS construction permits**.
- DOH CHD employees also facilitated the issuance of over **12,000 operating permits** required for more advanced systems (i.e., aerobic treatment units [ATUs] and performance-based treatment systems, which require maintenance).

### STATEWIDE COMPLIANCE AND ENFORCEMENT BACKGROUND

- In fiscal year (FY) 2022-23, DOH CHD employees performed nearly **8,000 compliance and enforcement related services** (i.e., responding to sanitary nuisances or other OSTDS compliance concerns).



# TRANSFER PLAN

## CENTRALIZED OSP ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

- DEP is developing a **centralized organizational structure** for OSP and its provision of OSTDS permitting, enforcement and compliance assistance services throughout the state.
  - DEP's OSP is based out a **centralized program headquarters** in Tallahassee and incorporates existing OSP program staff together with several new FTE positions to manage OSTDS program functions, guide OSP field staff and support the activities of delegated local OSTDS programs, as applicable.
  - OSP managers located at DEP regulatory district offices or other office locations throughout the state will direct and supervise the activities of OSP field and support staff assigned to **up to 16 OSP service hub areas**.
  - **Centralizing management, permit processing and enforcement** will increase program efficiency and ensure statewide program consistency.



# HUB AND SPOKE MODEL

## FOR FLEXIBLE AND ADAPTIVE SERVICE

### EFFICIENCY IMPROVEMENTS FOR FIELD STAFF

- **Four days each week in the field**, directly traveling from their homes to the first job site each day.
  - Utilize **tablets** with **digital forms** for site evaluations, inspections and nuisance complaints.
  - Ensures data is recorded in **real-time** and transmitted to the central office without delays.
- **One day each week in the office** providing administrative support for other field staff.
  - In-office duties include building permits, planning routes and any administrative tasks required to support staff in the field as they work.



# HUB AND SPOKE MODEL CONTINUED

## FOR FLEXIBLE AND ADAPTIVE SERVICE

### STREAMLINED PERMITTING

- In-office staff receive data from field staff and begin drafting permits using the Environmental Health Database (EHD).
- Field staff review and finalize these permits by the end of each shift.

### ENHANCED COORDINATION AND FLEXIBILITY

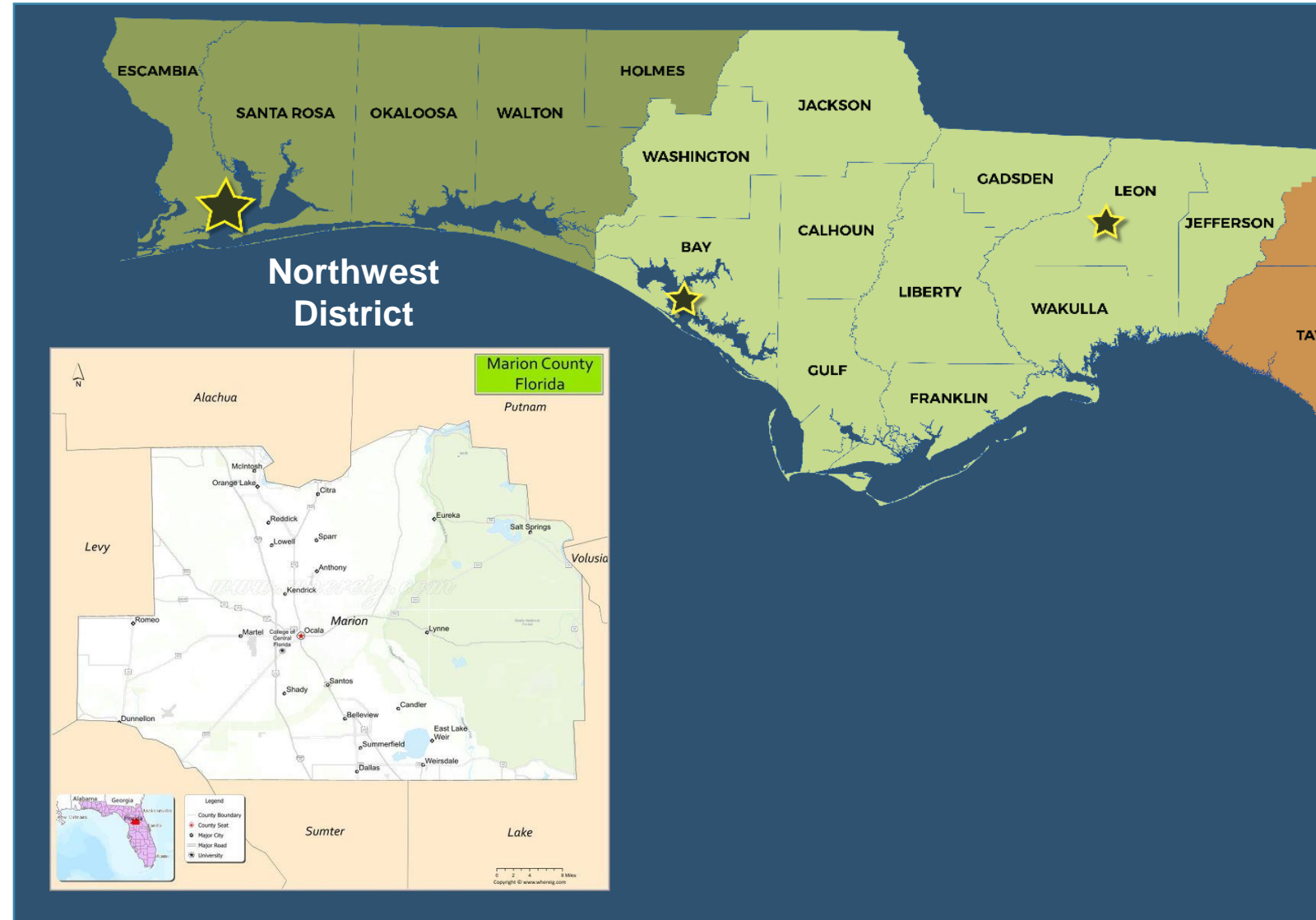
- Managers will use the online service request application (e.g., site evaluation or construction inspection) to assign staff to jobs based on geographic location and proximity, ensuring minimal travel time between job sites.
- Leadership can direct resources where they are needed based on workload and availability.



# PHASED TRANSITION TO DEP

## A NEW MODEL FOR PROVIDING SERVICE

- **Hub and spoke model:** field staff will be geographically dispersed statewide across 16 service hubs.
- **Three phases:**
  1. Northwest Florida.
  2. Northeast and Central Florida.
  3. South Florida.







# PROGRAM TRANSFER PLAN

## MODELED AFTER OTHER DEP PROGRAMS

### OPTIONS

1. **DEP expands OSP** to include OSTDS staff based out of DEP regulatory district offices or other service area offices; expanded staff administers the OSTDS permitting and compliance assistance program within specified counties.
2. **Counties take on delegation** of OSTDS permitting and compliance assistance program through a specific operating agreement between DEP and the county's government.



# NEXT STEPS

## LOGISTICAL AND OPERATIONAL ASPECTS OF TRANSFER

- **Archival records and data management at DOH CHDs.**
  - Physical records.
  - Digital records.
  - Record retention policies.
  - Third-party contracts.
- **OSTDS program support between CHDs and local governments.**
  - Local ordinance enforcement.
  - Pre-application reviews for development authorizations.
  - Advisory service to local environmental boards.





# NEXT STEPS

## RULEMAKING: CHAPTER 62-6, F.A.C.

- **Contractor certifications.**
  - Online applications and recertifications.
  - Streamlining certification process.
  - Online examinations.
- **Private provider inspectors.**
  - Transitioning to DEP and establishing standards.
- **Streamlined permits for OSTDS.**
  - General permits for standard applications.
  - Lots platted prior to 1983.
  - Repair permits.
  - Bulk development permitting.





# NEXT STEPS

## ONLINE PERMIT APPLICATIONS

### MOVING AWAY FROM MANUAL PAPER APPLICATIONS

- **Short-term solution.**

- OSP is building a web-based form to allow applicants to apply for and receive their permits completely electronically online without needing to travel to a government office.

- **Long-term solution.**

- OSTDS permitting will be incorporated into DEP's permitting portal early 2026.

1. OSTDS Permit Number - This can be found on your payment receipt and will begin with the number "36-" Do not enter any other identification number e.g. building permit number, AP number, BID #, or Strap Number. Entering an incorrect number will prevent the system from processing your request. \*

Enter your answer

2. Jobsite Address - Please copy and paste the full address from the property appraiser website, <https://leepa.org/>, to ensure your request is processed by our system correctly. Make sure all elements of the address are correct, including street number, name, direction (NE, SW), suffix, state and zip code. \*

Enter your answer

3. Jobsite Zip Code - Please use the zip code found on the property appraisers website to ensure your request is processed by our system correctly. \*

Enter your answer

4. Requestor's name and company. \*

Enter your answer





# NEXT STEPS

## BUILDING ADDITIONAL PROGRAM EFFICIENCIES

- **Online exam testing options for certifications and licensing of individuals providing OSTDS services.**
  - Septic tank contractors.
  - DEP/private OSTDS site evaluators.
  - DEP/private inspectors.
- **Additional automation for digital processes.**
  - Reduce opportunities for error.
  - Optimize use of available resources.
- **Continued efforts and initiatives to modernize and streamline the program.**

The screenshot displays the Florida Onsite Sewage Program website. At the top, the title "Florida Onsite Sewage Program" is centered. Below the title, there are navigation links for "Contact Us" and "Help". A secondary navigation bar shows "Tests" and "Program Info". A warning message states: "Authorization Needed: This test requires authorization from the test sponsor. If your test sponsor has already transferred a test eligibility/authorization record, it will be available to you after log-in." The main content area is titled "Registered Septic Tank Contractor Exam" and includes tabs for "FAQs" and "Test Instructions". Under "FAQs", there is a section for "PSI Exam Center Regulations - Live Proctored" with four numbered rules: 1. No conversing or any other form of communication among candidates is permitted once you enter the examination area. 2. You are prohibited from reproducing, communicating or transmitting any test content in any form for any purpose. Copying or communicating content is a violation of PSI security policy. Either one may result in the disqualification of examination results, may lead to legal action and will be reported to your Sponsor. 3. Electronic devices and recording devices of any kind (including but not limited to cell phones, pagers, cameras) are NOT permitted in PSI testing centers. 4. NO personal items should be brought to the testing centers. PSI will not be responsible for any. To the right of the regulations, there is a call-to-action box with the text "To continue the booking process and schedule your test, you must sign in or create an account." and a prominent "SIGN IN/REGISTER" button.





# THANK YOU

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