

*Onsite Wastewater Construction Permits
Electronic Permitting and Data Storage
Concept Paper
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Goal: Provide a database to create and track information on private onsite septic systems for individual houses in Iowa. Make this system available on the internet to all county sanitarians to issue construction permits and track information about these systems. Homeowners could eventually go online to check on the status of a permit or of an existing system.

Project Purpose: The purpose is to make it possible for county sanitarians to have an electronic database to issue onsite wastewater permits and for the state to track the efforts of the counties to meet the state-mandated permitting requirements.

Background: Since the late 1960's, the counties in Iowa have been expected to regulate the sewage disposal from private houses not connected to a Public wastewater treatment system. The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (Department) was required to promulgate uniform state-wide standards and the counties were to enforce them. This involved issuing permits and overseeing the construction and maintenance of these private household septic systems.

Most counties have tried to maintain some sort of paper database of the sewer systems so that homeowners could find out what they have and when it was installed. More recently, several of the larger counties have attempted to convert their paper records to an electronic format. Most of the counties have not been able to afford to do that. The Department is interested in creating a web-based database that all counties could use to track their onsite wastewater programs. The Department has allocated EPA Clean Water State Revolving Fund money to create a low interest loan program for onsite wastewater treatment systems that eliminate non-point source pollution. As the counties issue construction permits on replacement of existing inadequate treatment systems the Department needs to track these loans and the associated management requirements. About eight years ago the Department also created an EPA National Pollution Discharge Elimination System general discharge permit program for onsite wastewater systems that have surface discharges. Since the permit requirements may not be delegated to the counties, the Department also needs to include this data tracking in the database.

The plan is that there would be not only a system to help the counties do their mandated job, but to begin to collect state-wide data on the program. Selected portions of this data could be made available to the general public so they could know what they

have for a sewer system, when it was installed and when any maintenance work may be necessary. Access would be controlled and limited. The federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has expressed interest in also receiving this information.

The IDNR has already contracted for and received a business plan for the database. This was done with \$50,000 from an EPA "STAG" grant. We are now soliciting funding to carry out the plan. The business plan is attached.

The Department has created the One Stop Environmental Facilities database project that will include the onsite database as a link. The One Stop Environmental Facilities project is a five year EPA funded program that utilizes Services Oriented Architecture methodology to link all program databases in the Department by facility.

Deliverables: Key deliverables are: a internet based database for counties to track and document onsite wastewater systems through permitting, construction, and monitoring; a database of basic information about the onsite wastewater systems in Iowa including types and locations as well as tracking surface discharge quality monitoring; and a collection of basic data to send to EPA for them to be able to evaluate Iowa's progress. The Department is not requesting the development of a "permitting" process, as the counties already have that capability and responsibility. Rather, we are requesting that a repository of shared data be created by the counties and entered into a state Internet application that can be utilized by the Department and EPA, with some data being authorized, controlled and limited for access by the public and other stakeholders.

Request: The Department is requesting \$150,000 to create this web-based database. (This would pay for the minimum capability. With additional funds more functionality could be added.) We will utilize the help of a stakeholders committee of county and state personnel to finalize the details of the program. With this money the program could be created, tested and ready for county personnel use within one year.

Cost Avoidance: This project will facilitate electronic collection and transfer of information that would cost much more if it were to be done by paper. In fact, without electronic data collection and transfer this type of information is prohibitively expensive to make available.

Project Funds: These funds will be used only to contract with an IT consultant. None of the money will be used for Departmental staff or overhead costs.

Interested Parties: Parties interested in this project include the following: federal EPA, state IDNR staff, county environmental health staff, sewer system installation contractors, and anyone utilizing a private sewer system in rural Iowa.

Some of the Recipients of this Service: Counties, contractors, rural residents, IDNR and EPA