Best Practices for Onsite Wastewater System Inspections, Maintenance and Record Keeping in the Lake Simcoe Watershed

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Presentation Overview

Introduction

- Healthy lakes mean social, environmental and economic prosperity for our Province.
- Waters are threatened by private rural onsite wastewater (septic) systems, through phosphorus loading
- Out of sight, out of mind mentality.
- Reinspection programs are inconsistently managed
- Opportunity for collaborative management of programs: government and local communities

Background

What we know:

- 2012 Ontario Building Code (O.Reg 315/10)
 - Mandatory septic reinspections
 - Onsite septic systems within 100m of Lake Simcoe surface waters and all provincial source protection areas
- Reinspections contribute to lake and groundwater protection
 - Human and environmental health
 - Lake Simcoe Protection Plan

My Research

- Addresses the quality of septic system re-inspection programs
 - Semi-structured interviews
- Collaboration as a framework for Environmental Stewardship/ Capacity Building
- Improve the capacity for Principal Authorities, within environmentally vulnerable areas, to adopt provincially-standardized best practices for septic reinspections in the Lake Simcoe Watershed

Research Goals

- Jurisdictional scan of best practices within the Great Lakes region of Canada and the U.S.A.
- Identify reinspection program administrators' perceptions of intra-provincial program support
- Assess level of awareness of home or system owner regarding their onsite septic system
- Propose a best practice, collaboration-based framework for septic reinspections in Ontario

Lake Simcoe Watershed

Where?

Town of Innisfil

Township of Oro Medonte

City of Barrie

Who? Stakeholders!

Preliminary Results

Implications

- A collaborative management approach will allow governments and local communities to efficiently work towards common goals
- Improved modelling forecasts for phosphorus loading within watersheds
- Opportunities for future generations to enjoy safe and healthy lakes

Conclusion

- Knowledge of onsite septic systems may encourage environmental stewardship
- Successes and lessons learned at the local level contribute to proposed framework for future action
- Collaboration plays a role in ensuring government program advice is being retained and practiced consistently across Ontario

Thank you

Questions?

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