

Michael F. Easley, Governor
William G. Ross, Secretary
Terry L. Pierce, Director



MEMORANDUM

TO: Local Health Departments
Peat System Owners/Operators/Manufacturers

FROM: Terry L. Pierce, Director
Division of Environmental Health

DATE: May 16, 2005

SUBJECT: Modifications to Peat Filter Innovative Approvals' Performance and Monitoring Requirements, Effective May 30, 2005

Within the past five months, the Peat Subcommittee of the Commission for Health Services has been working closely with manufacturers, health departments and the state's On-Site Wastewater Section to evaluate and improve the operation, maintenance, monitoring and management of innovative peat wastewater systems in North Carolina. As a result, the subcommittee's recommendations were recently approved by the full Commission. With the CHS approval, a rule-making process will take place within the next few months in anticipation that the recommended changes will be in effect by early 2006. The Commission Report can be viewed on the On-Site Wastewater Section's Web site, located on-line at www.deh.enr.state.nc.us/oww.

Enclosed are modifications to the current performance standards and monitoring requirements for peat systems which are consistent with the approved Commission recommendations. These modifications will provide a more streamlined and effective inspection/monitoring program compared to previous methods of inspecting peat systems:

- ?? All systems shall continue to require inspection, and annual sampling continues to be required until replaced by a manufacturer's annual audit program.
- ?? Sampling is now required for just two effluent parameters for all peat systems, regardless of size. Influent data (for two influent parameters) shall be collected concurrently.
- ?? The operator is also to collect or arrange for the owner to assist in the collection of the three- to four-day, seven-day or 30-day wastewater usage data for the period immediately prior to a maintenance/sampling visit.

- ?? Water quality parameters shall be re-sampled or additional flow data collected if significant problems are identified.
- ?? By simultaneously determining influent flow and quality, any problems with effluent quality can be more effectively diagnosed, so problems can be prevented before resulting in system failure or environmental degradation.

These modifications apply to peat system performance inspections beginning May 30, and shall remain applicable until the system manufacturer has an operational annual audit program in place – a key aspect of the Commission’s recommendations.

Problems with peat systems arise due to a variety of reasons. The problems are often associated with allowing occupancy by more people than the system was originally designed to serve, washing clothes in excess, using harsh chemicals, or disposing grease or waste food products into the wastewater system. To prevent system failure or environmental degradation, peat system operators should inform owners after each inspection of any special maintenance needs, such as pumping the septic tank, removal of extraneous vegetation, treating for insect infestations or replacing the peat media.

By preventing system misuse, adhering to appropriate routine maintenance procedures and assuring proper on-going system performance, peat systems should successfully serve a facility for years to come.

Your cooperation is greatly appreciated. If you have any questions about the monitoring requirements or your system, please contact environmental health staff at the local health department, or the On-Site Wastewater Section Regional or Raleigh Office staff at (800)-9SEWAGE (800-973-9234).