

Houston-Galveston Area Council
2012-15 Wastewater Treatment Assistance
SEP No. 2012-15

Project Description:

Houston-Galveston Area Council (“H-GAC”) shall provide assistance to low-income homeowners to repair or replace malfunctioning or failing onsite wastewater treatment systems. H-GAC may also provide extension of first-time sewer service, pump-out service, and water conservation equipment such as low-flow showerheads. An onsite wastewater treatment system is a system of treatment devices or disposal facilities that (1) is used for the disposal of domestic sewage, excluding liquid waste resulting from the processes used in industrial and commercial establishments; (2) is located on the site where the sewage is produced; and (3) produces not more than 5,000 gallons of waste a day. TEX. HEALTH & SAFETY CODE § 367.001(2) and 30 TEX. ADMIN. CODE § 286.2(7). Low-income households fall at or below the 80 percent median income level for households in the area where they live. TEX. GOV’T CODE § 2306.004(15).

H-GAC shall identify property owners for wastewater treatment assistance. Each candidate shall complete an application, including standard income documentation, to determine eligibility. H-GAC shall review applications for eligibility for assistance at H-GAC’s expense. After a candidate’s low-income income status is verified, H-GAC shall determine whether a repair, replacement, pump-out, or tie-in is appropriate. H-GAC shall then seek bids from local onsite wastewater treatment system contractors to perform the work. If a new system will be installed, H-GAC shall determine which kind of system is appropriate for installation at each qualified site based on factors including the size of the property and the soil composition.

H-GAC shall select a qualified bidder for all installations. The contractor shall submit an application including all standard wastewater treatment system installation requirements that shall be reviewed by H-GAC. Upon approval of the application, the system shall be installed by the selected contract company. After the system installation is completed by the contract company and approved by H-GAC, payment shall be made by H-GAC to the selected contractor using SEP Funds.

H-GAC shall ensure that all Project work is performed in compliance with local, state, and federal rules relating to onsite wastewater treatment systems. H-GAC shall ensure that only properly licensed contractors are utilized for Project activities.

Eligible Sites

Eligible sites will be limited to those where the household qualifies as low-income as defined by TEX. GOV’T CODE § 2306.004(15). Sites that are under enforcement for violation of TCEQ rules are not eligible for assistance under this SEP.

Environmental Benefit

Many of the onsite wastewater treatment systems currently in use in H-GAC ‘s region are substandard or in disrepair, resulting in the discharge of sewage into local neighborhoods, ditches, and waterways. These septic system failures coupled with proximity to the coast and numerous waterways increases the need to identify problem systems and replace or repair them to prevent further release of raw sewage into the environment.

Each failing septic system that is replaced will improve the water quality in waterways and watersheds by preventing raw sewage with high levels of bacteria, viruses, and protozoa from entering the environment. Sewage overflows may reach rivers, lakes, streams, or aquifer systems. In addition to potential spread of disease, sewage in the environment contributes excess nutrients, metals, and toxic pollutants that contaminate water quality, cause algae blooms, and kill fish and other organisms in aquatic habitats. Removal of sewage as a source of pollution will also protect ground, surface, and drinking water from contamination.

This Project has the potential to not only improve water quality but also improve the public health for a sector of the population that is least able to afford health care. Diseases that result from sewage contaminated water range from mild gastroenteritis (causing stomach cramps and diarrhea) to life threatening ailments such as cholera, dysentery, infectious hepatitis, and severe gastroenteritis. People can be exposed through sewage in drinking water sources, direct contact from water in lawns or streets, and inhalation and skin absorption.

Eligible Counties

Austin, Brazoria, Chambers, Colorado, Fort Bend, Harris, Galveston, Grimes, Liberty, Matagorda, Montgomery, San Jacinto, Waller, Walker, and Wharton Counties

Minimum Contribution Amount

\$500

Total Project Budget

\$492,000