



Converting to Sewer Systems Enhances Water Quality and Boosts Alternative Supply

Long before modern municipal sewer systems were widely available, septic tanks were the waste management system of choice. Today, research shows that old or poorly functioning septic tanks cause groundwater contamination by allowing wastewater to percolate into the groundwater, which ultimately winds up in our springs, lakes, rivers and other waterways.

The St. Johns River Water Management District offers cost-share programs to assist local governments, agricultural entities, and other non-governmental organizations with projects that align with the District's core missions and benefit local communities. The city of Longwood is one of the many governments who have taken advantage of this program.

Since 2016, the city has received cost-share funding for six different projects that have removed nearly 1,000 septic tanks. The latest phase converted 132 properties from septic tanks to the city sewer system. This process includes installing a central sewer system, abandoning the old septic tanks, setting up individual laterals, repairing the roadway for lateral connections, and physically connecting the homes to the sewer system.

"It's not a cheap, quick or easy fix. Residents must adjust to living amidst dust, construction equipment and torn up roads during construction," says District Cost-Share Project Manager Mark Brandenburg. "However, this process ultimately benefits the community, and by utilizing the District's cost-share program, the city has been able to make the transition affordable for residents."

An additional benefit of this conversion is that each property now generates approximately 300 gallons per day of alternative water supply in the form of reclaimed water.

"Water supply is one of the District's core missions," Brandenburg explains. "By converting homes from septic systems to sewer connections, we're not only improving our waterways but also contributing to the area's alternative water supply."

To learn more about the District's cost-share program, please visit sjrwmd.com/localgovernments/funding.