

Just as the sewage treatment situation varies a great deal from community to community, so too does the information communities need to make an informed sewage treatment decision.

Before your community can begin to review wastewater treatment options, the steering committee needs to assemble a wide array of information that will help everyone better understand the situation and present this information to the community. Committee members or other volunteers will need to work with local units of government (LUGs) and other organizations to assemble that information. This chapter discusses some of the information you will need and where that information might be found. Just as the sewage treatment situation varies a great deal from community to community, so too does the information communities need to make an informed sewage treatment decision. Therefore, the suggestions in this chapter should be viewed only as a starting point: all the information discussed may not be necessary in every situation and, in some cases, information other than that discussed here may be necessary.

Once the information is gathered, steering committee members, resource people and other key members of the community will need to take a hard look at the data to determine what it all means. Transformation of the raw data into useful information lets the community gain a clearer understanding of what's happening today and what's likely to happen in the future. This provides a better sense of direction as the project proceeds.

An assessment of existing community assets and trends that will affect the community in the future should be presented at an initial town meeting (see Chapter 8). It is important that the information presented be unbiased and give a complete picture. The critical nature of this step is suggested by this question: If you don't know where you are and what you have to work with, how will you know where you want to be and how to get there?

Gathering the Data: Types and Sources

Each entry below lists the type of information that may be necessary, where that information may be found and the reason the information may be useful in the community's decision-making process.

Local Regulations

● **Comprehensive land use plan**

County Environmental Services office or County Planning and Zoning office.

A comprehensive land use plan provides the broad framework and vision of how the community and its citizens intend to respond to and manage change. The plan provides the legal basis and initial tools needed to manage land use, environmental quality, resource preservation and utilization and sustainability within the county. This information is critical to water and wastewater issues because it provides the vision for future population density and growth potential. It must be noted that the plan may change, subject to changes in political control and future desires of citizens.