Protecting Public Health and the Environment through Workforce Training

- In Texas alone, some two million onsite wastewater treatment systems exist, serving approximately 20 percent of the state’s population. About 35,000 new residential and business onsite treatment systems—also called septic systems—are installed annually in Texas.
- Faulty systems are considered a significant source of the contaminants in 300 Texas stream segments that presently do not meet water quality standards.
- Proper operation and maintenance of these wastewater treatment systems is critical for protecting public health, as well as groundwater and surface-water resources.

Extension’s Response

- AgriLife Extension has developed short courses and training centers to improve the skills of installers, site evaluators, designers, and inspectors of wastewater treatment systems.
- The Onsite Wastewater Treatment Training Program is conducted by the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service in cooperation with the Texas Onsite Wastewater Association. A 16-hour course covers a broad spectrum of technologies and maintenance practices used in treating residential and business wastewater.
- The courses prepare maintenance providers for certification and licensing, per the education requirements of the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality.
- In 2011, the program conducted three continuing education sessions for 64 maintenance providers.
- The program also offered one course for homeowners, training 5 individuals about the operation and maintenance of their private wastewater treatment system.

Economic Impact

- The average annual wages for wastewater treatment system maintenance providers were used to value the wage impact of this training program.
- By providing quality education to the state’s onsite wastewater treatment maintenance providers, the Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems Program directly supports 64 maintenance-provider jobs with an estimated annual wage base of $1.9 million.

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