

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. What is the difference between a hot spot, a cold spot and a warm spot?

A. Properties located in **hot spots** have been determined to be within the central service area and these properties will be required to connect to the central system when it is available. Properties located in **warm spots** were not originally included in the wastewater district when the Monroe County Master Plan was developed. Through advances in technology and additional engineering considerations warm spot areas are now being considered for inclusion into the central service area. Properties in **cold spots** likely will not have central wastewater service available, but will still be required to comply with the State mandated 2010 wastewater standards. Please read on for additional information on cold spot options.

Q. My property is listed as a warm spot on the map. When will I know if it is included in the system?

A. Following our public outreach meetings we will complete additional design analysis and bring the inclusion area to the Board of County Commissioners for adoption in the first quarter of 2009.

Q. How did certain properties get designated as warm spots?

A. Simple. If it costs the same to connect a property to the central system as it would to perform an on-site conversion, it makes perfect sense to connect, both for the environment and your pocketbook. We find that the breakeven point is about 500 feet per dwelling from a feasible connection point. If a dwelling is farther away than this, then it will generally be more cost-effective to install an on-site system. The designated warm spots on the new maps appear to meet this criteria. This approach will be refined during the final design phase.

Q. If my current onsite system meets the required Best Available Technology (BAT) standards do I have to connect to the central wastewater system?

A. Properties with a BAT compliant system in **cold spot** areas do not need to connect to the central system and only need to maintain their system in order to remain compliant with the State mandate. These properties will not be assessed.

Currently, as the code is written, **warm spots** properties would be required to connect to the central system. Recognizing that these property owners took the initiative to become compliant at a time when these properties were not scheduled to be connected to the central system, the agencies are working to find a solution that will not penalize compliant property owners.

Since the inception of the Monroe County Wastewater Master Plan, **hot spot** properties were known to have the connection requirement and will be required to connect to the central system.

Q. If I am not included in the central system, will I be required to comply with the 2010 standard on my own?

A. Striving to minimize impacts to cold spot areas, the FKAA is working on a partnership agreement with the Florida Department of Health (DOH) and Monroe County that will allow the FKAA to design, construct and operate On-site Wastewater Nutrient Removal Systems (OWNRS) on private properties in cold spot areas. The DOH and Monroe County will regulate and enforce administrative codes. The program allows property owners to opt-in or opt-out.

Q. If I opt into the FKAA On-Site program will I be assessed the same as a hot spot?

A. Assessments have not been determined at this time, but it is the intent of the onsite program to establish a uniform assessment for all properties in the district. Additional information will be provided as it becomes available.

Q. If I am in a hot spot am I required to connect to the system?

A. Where central wastewater service is available, per Monroe County Code, all developed properties are required to connect to the system.

Q. Will property owners be fined if they are not connected by the State mandated 2010 deadline?

A. The cooperating agencies are working diligently to prevent any fines from being levied against hot spot property owners and those cold spot property owners that choose to opt-in to the FKAA onsite program

Q. What are the property owner's responsibilities?

A. Municipal Service Taxing Unit (MSTU)

- Provides design and development funding
- Is levied by Monroe County
- The MSTU may be charged at a maximum rate of \$70 per \$100,000 in property value and levied up to 4 years

System Development Charge (Assessment)

- For your share of the project's capital costs
 - Based on Equivalent Dwelling Units (EDUs)
 - Payable either in full or over 20 years through a non ad valorem assessment on your annual tax bill
 - Cost depends on available funding

Cost of installing lateral and decommissioning the septic tank

- Varies depending on the length of the run and obstacles encountered. (typically between \$1,500-\$5,000)

Monthly user charge for operation of the system

- Estimated to cost between \$70-\$90 per month

Q. How much will the assessment be per dwelling unit?

A. The County and FKAA are currently seeking funding sources for the project. The actual cost will not be known until all funding sources have been identified.

Q. When will properties be assessed?

A. When final design has been completed and construction is about to begin.

Q. If I have more than one residential unit how will I be assessed?

A. Each unit identified by the Monroe County Property Appraiser will be assessed one equivalent dwelling unit (EDU). For example a duplex would be considered 2 EDUs and would pay for 2 units (2x assessment amount).

Q. How are assessments calculated for non-residential properties?

A. Non-residential properties will be assessed based according to their water consumption.

Q. I have a commercial property that uses a lot of potable water for irrigation. Will my assessment calculation include this consumption?

A. Commercial properties that have excessive potable water use that does not return to the wastewater system may want to consider applying for an irrigation meter. Consumption from irrigation meters will not be considered in the assessment calculation. Please call the FKAA at 305-296-2454 for details on obtaining an irrigation meter.

Q. Will vacant parcels be assessed?

A. A final decision regarding the assessment of vacant properties has not been made at this time.

Q. What are the costs associated with a lateral installation? (as of January 2009)

A. Permits

- Septic/Cesspit Abandonment (DOH) \$50
- Lateral Installation Permit (County) \$66

Plumber Installation

- Varies depending on the length of the run and obstacles encountered
- Past experience indicates costs between \$1,500 & \$5,000

Owner/Builder Option

- Property owners that live in the residential dwelling may be allowed to complete their own lateral installation

Consult with Monroe County Building Department for requirements

- Q. I am a renter, how will this project affect me?**
A. Renters are not directly responsible for paying assessments or ensuring the connection to the system is completed. Once operational a wastewater base facility charge and a wastewater flow charge will appear on the water bill. As always, the account holder or property owner is responsible for payment of the monthly bill.
- Q. I live in an RV/mobile home park. How will I be assessed?**
A. If you own the individual parcel you will be assessed for that parcel. If the lots are not individually owned the park owner will be assessed based on consumption. It will be up to the park to determine how to recover the costs from tenants.
- Q. Does each property in an RV park complete its own connection to the central system?**
A. The existing internal plumbing configuration in the park can, for the most part, remain the same.
- Q. When will the system be ready for homeowner connections?**
A. Assuming funding will be available in the near term, an aggressive schedule has been established estimating the earliest connections to the system in 2011. Updated information will be made available as FCAA obtains funding information.
- Q. May I convert my septic tank into a cistern rather than abandon the tank?**
A. Recently the Department of Health has begun to issue variances to homeowners who wish to convert their septic systems into cisterns. Contact the Department of Health at (305) 293-7524 for more information on their specific requirements.
- Q. What type of wastewater system will be installed?**
A. Several wastewater technologies have been evaluated. Although final design is not complete it appears that multiple technologies, including, gravity, vacuum and low pressure systems, may be employed to efficiently contend with the diversity of the district.
- Q. Where is the wastewater treatment plant going to be located?**
A. The treatment plant will be located on an abandoned portion of the Cudjoe Key Transfer Station. This disturbed, county owned property is located in a remote section of Cudjoe Key away from U.S 1 and residential neighborhoods.
- Q. Who will monitor the quality and effectiveness of this system?**
A. The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) requires testing of influent and effluent throughout the day to ensure that the treatment process is meeting the stringent advanced wastewater treatment standards. Daily testing results are recorded by the FCAA and reported to the FDEP.
- Q. What is the proposed capacity of the wastewater treatment plant?**
A. Ultimately the plant will be designed up to treat up to one million gallons per day.
- Q. What will be done with the biosolid residuals generated wastewater treatment plant?**
A. The biosolid residuals will be removed by a licensed hauler and delivered to sludge disposal facility outside of Monroe County.
- Q. Will reclaimed water be available?**
A. The distribution of reclaimed water will depend on feasibility and available funding.
- Q. What happens when the electric power is out?**
A. A stand-by generator will power the treatment plant. Pump stations will be powered by portable generators to prevent uninterrupted service on gravity collection systems.
- Q. Who can I call for additional information?**
A. Contact: Julie Cheon, Environmental Specialist, Florida Keys Aqueduct Authority
Email: jcheon@fcaa.com
Phone: 305-295-2178