

*(Insert Date Here)*

*(Insert Title and First Name/Last Name Here)*

*(Insert Mailing Address)*

*(Insert City, State and Zip Code)*

Dear *(Insert Title and Last Name)*:

*This year, the Legislature passed landmark legislation to help preserve more than 2.5 million homeowners' ability to retain their use of onsite septic systems. This represents one-third of all wastewater treatment systems in Florida.*

*The driving force behind SB 550 was not the independent septic tank contractors or the Florida Onsite Wastewater Association (FOWA), but the impending Federal mandates designed to deprive many of the 2.5 million Florida citizens use of their systems. Compliance with the federal mandates has been based upon the assumption that failing septic systems are responsible for significant environmental damage.*

*SB 550 was a collaboration of realtors, builders, industry professionals, and conservation groups to provide a fiscally responsible alternative to the significant costs associated with the limited options of Sewers and Performance Based systems being offered to comply. SB550 provides for the inexpensive alternative of responsibly managed systems. Over the next five years, it will provide the state with a valuable assessment tool of the 2.5 million currently installed systems.*

*This effort will also make the public more aware of the proper way to maintain their systems and the potential costs if they fail to do so. When a program of this magnitude is managed by certified, experienced industry professionals, the cost to the individual is driven down by competition while the benefits to the State remains significantly higher than the costs to the government.*

*Without this law, those homeowners and other users of onsite systems could face increased federal regulations, be forced to hook up to central water systems and/or higher costs for replacement or repairs.*

*FOWA worked with your colleagues so that this legislation set uniform standards for how these systems should be evaluated every five years. These evaluations are to be performed by a variety of privately licensed professionals but must be verified by certified state and local officials. The fact is less than 1% of septic tanks receive regular evaluations.*

*Currently, it is estimated that half of Florida's onsite systems are old and not up to federal and state standards. These systems could be damaging our fresh water and causing Florida to be targeted by federal regulators. If we can ensure these systems are working properly, it will help deter the new U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) nitrogen nutrient standards targeting for Florida.*

*This initiative will help accomplish three important goals:*

- 1. Saves Owners Money** – *A five-year evaluation will save onsite owners money by extending the life of those systems for up to 50 years if properly maintained.*
  - a. The costs associated with an evaluation amount to as little as \$2.50/per month over a five-year period. Should a system require a pump out, the entire cost would only rise to approximately \$10/per month over the same period.*
  - b. Ensuring that systems are functioning properly can save owners hundreds, if not thousands, of dollars in repair and potential replacement costs.*
  - c. The legislation does not mandate any upgrades to a current system.*
  - d. By keeping systems operating effectively, this could help prevent owners from being forced to hook up to expensive central sewer, which can save thousands of dollars in new installation costs and complying with monthly water fees that an onsite owner never had to pay prior. Mandatory hook ups cost much more than the evaluation for owners.*
  
- 2. Creates Uniform Standards to Protect Owners** – *With the same standards for onsite operations across Florida, this keeps government regulators in check. The law prevents a regulator from different parts of the state from making inappropriate interpretations of how a system is functioning. The onsite industry and other stakeholders are working today to ensure that standards are simple, clear and cannot be turned against onsite users by state or local bureaucracies.*
  
- 3. Protects Florida from Federal Water Standards** – *The real threat of EPA's numeric nutrient standards for Florida could devastate the state's agricultural industry as well as suburban and rural areas across the state. With uniform standards and the establishment of a well-functioning onsite system for 2.5 million users, these evaluations could reduce the threat of new federal regulations that could possibly force owners to hook up to costly municipal systems.*

**FOWA** *urges the Legislature to allow this initiative the opportunity to succeed. Through the implementation of this effort, we are committed to protect the onsite owners of your district from costly repairs and intrusive government regulations.*

*Please contact FOWA Executive Director, Roxanne Groover, at (863) 956-5540, FOWA Legislative Affairs Committee Chairperson, Ron Davenport at (321) 684-1668 or a member of FOWA's Board of Directors, if they can provide any further information or should you wish to visit on this important issue.*

*Sincerely,*

***(Insert Your Name Here)***