

Orleans is talking wastewater

By **DOUG FRASER**
STAFF WRITER

ORLEANS – Something close to a gasp went through the standing-room-only crowd at Snow Library last night as consultant Michael Giggey said more than half the town's developed lots will probably need something besides a septic system to treat their wastewater to protect the town's bays and ponds.

In the next 20 years or so, 3,300 parcels, or 70 percent of what exists today, must have their wastewater piped off their property and treated at some type of plant.

If the town chooses to do nothing "it will be difficult to swim and fish along shore, the DEP (state Department of Environmental Protection) will be knocking at your door with legal action, possibly heavy fines, and property values will decline," Giggey said.

Last night's meeting was the first of four to educate and elicit ideas from taxpayers on how they would like to see the problem solved. The town contracted with Giggey and the environmental engineering firm Wright-Pierce to analyze wastewater needs and lay out possible solutions with an eye toward producing a comprehensive wastewater management plan.

That plan is the blueprint for dealing with nutrients like nitrogen and phosphorus that cause explosive plant growth that can choke the life out of coastal waters and ponds. It is hoped it will be voted on at town meeting next spring.

The DEP has also invested \$12 million to work with towns to develop total daily maximum load amounts for contaminants in every state water body. Once the town knows these limits, they can plan for how to reduce them.

Giggey said the solutions will be mapped out this fall and will include options from sewerage large areas to a mix of small neighborhood wastewater treatment plants, larger satellite plants like the one in use at the Community of Jesus in Rock Harbor, and larger plants capable of treating whole sections of town.

The current Tri-Town Septage Treatment Facility could offer one site for a large wastewater treatment facility, but Giggey said Orleans might have to look to other towns for land to build other wastewater facilities.

Alternative septic treatments that remove nitrogen from individual home systems will also be considered.

ORLEANS WATERSHEDS

The town is split into four watersheds that each contribute water and wastewater into a specific pond or coastal water body.

■ Pleasant Bay: South of Main Street, 65 percent of the lots could have sewers.

■ Nauset system: North of Main Street, 55 percent need sewers.

■ Cape Cod Bay: West of Route 6A, 25 percent need sewers.

■ Atlantic Ocean watershed: Runs along Nauset Beach, no sewers.

Around 2,600 lots need treatment to protect salt-water bodies and 60 lots need treatment to protect ponds.

Copies of the wastewater report are available at town hall and Snow Library and can be downloaded at www.town.orleans.ma.us.

Doug Fraser can be reached at dfraser@capecodonline.com.