

The Florida Senate
BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Committee on Rules

BILL: CS/CS/SB 698

INTRODUCER: Rules Committee; Environment and Natural Resources Committee; and Senator Martin

SUBJECT: Onsite Sewage Treatment and Disposal System Permits

DATE: February 24, 2026

REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	<u>Carroll</u>	<u>Rogers</u>	<u>EN</u>	Fav/CS
2.	<u>Tolmich</u>	<u>Fleming</u>	<u>CA</u>	Favorable
3.	<u>Carroll</u>	<u>Kruse</u>	<u>RC</u>	Fav/CS

Please see Section IX. for Additional Information:

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE - Substantial Changes

I. Summary:

CS/CS/SB 698 provides that if a building or plumbing permit is issued for a single-family residence that requires the use of an onsite sewage treatment and disposal system (septic system), a municipality or political subdivision of the state may not require an owner or builder to obtain a construction permit for the septic system as a condition of issuing the building or plumbing permit.

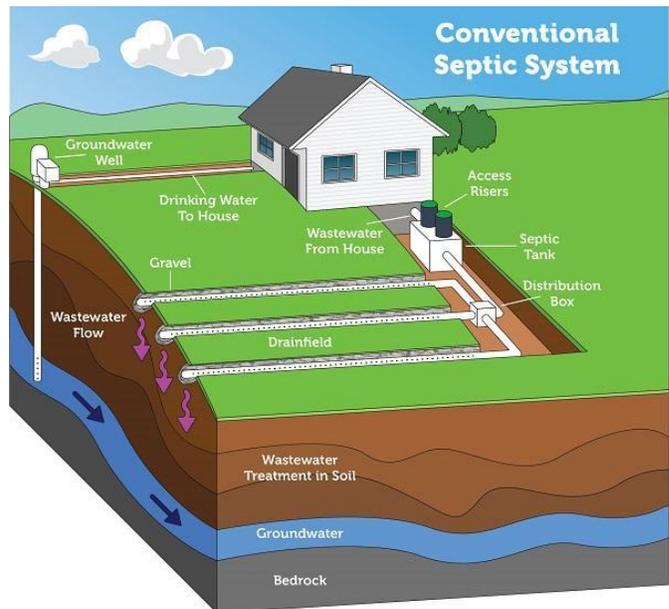
The bill requires a property owner or applicant for a septic system permit to assume all legal, financial, and safety liabilities arising from the construction of a septic system if the construction commences before the issuance of the septic system permit.

The bill also provides that any new rules relating to the use and installation of a septic system that are adopted by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection will not apply to permit applications submitted within 90 days after the date the rules are adopted.

II. Present Situation:

Onsite Sewage Treatment and Disposal Systems

Onsite sewage treatment and disposal systems (septic systems), commonly referred to as “septic systems,” generally consist of two basic parts: the septic tank and the drainfield.¹ Waste from toilets, sinks, washing machines, and showers flows through a pipe into the septic tank, where anaerobic bacteria break the solids into a liquid form. The liquid portion of the wastewater flows into the drainfield, which is generally a series of perforated pipes or panels surrounded by lightweight materials such as gravel or Styrofoam. The drainfield provides a secondary treatment where aerobic bacteria continue deactivating the germs. The drainfield also filters the wastewater as gravity draws the water down through the soil layers.² In Florida, the bottom of the drainfield must be at least 24 inches above the water table during the wettest season of the year.³



There are an estimated 2.6 million septic systems in Florida, providing wastewater disposal for 30 percent of the state’s population.⁴ The vast majority of these septic systems are conventional systems.⁵

Conventional septic systems do not reduce nitrogen from raw sewage. In Florida, approximately 30 to 40 percent of the nitrogen levels are reduced in the drainfield of a system that is installed

¹ Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), *Onsite Sewage Program*, available at <https://floridadep.gov/water/onsite-sewage> (last visited Feb. 2, 2026); U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), *How Septic Systems Work*, available at <https://www.epa.gov/septic/how-septic-systems-work> (last visited Feb. 2, 2026); EPA, *Types of Septic Systems*, available at <https://www.epa.gov/septic/types-septic-systems> (last visited Feb. 2, 2026) (showing the graphic provided in the analysis).

² *Id.*

³ Fla. Admin. Code R. 62-6.006(2). For system repairs and alterations to add sewage flow, where the existing elevation of the bottom surface of the drainfield is less than 24 inches above the wet season high water table, the bottom of the drainfield must be maintained at the existing separation or a minimum of 12 inches above the wet season high water table, whichever is greater. Where the bottom of the drainfield is less than 12 inches above the wet season high water table, the drainfield must be brought into full compliance with all new system standards. Fla. Admin. Code R. 62-6.001(4)(e)2. and 3. *See also* Fla. Admin. Code R. 62-6.015(6)(a).

⁴ DEP, *Onsite Sewage Program*, available at <https://floridadep.gov/water/onsite-sewage#:~:text=Onsite%20sewage%20treatment%20and%20disposal%20systems%20%28OSTDS%29%2C%20commonly,represents%2012%25%20of%20the%20United%20States%E2%80%99%20septic%20systems> (last visited Feb. 2, 2026).

⁵ DEP, *Onsite Sewage Research Projects*, available at <https://floridadep.gov/water/onsite-sewage/content/onsite-sewage-research-projects> (last visited Feb. 2, 2026).

24 inches or more from groundwater.⁶ This still leaves a significant amount of nitrogen to percolate into the groundwater, which makes nitrogen from septic systems a potential contaminant in groundwater.⁷

Different types of advanced septic systems can remove greater amounts of nitrogen than a typical septic system (often referred to as “advanced” or “nutrient-reducing” septic systems),⁸ and may be required in certain areas. For example, enhanced nutrient-reducing septic systems⁹ are required for new systems within the Indian River Lagoon¹⁰ and on lots of 1 acre or less within a basin management action plan, reasonable assurance plan, or pollution reduction plan where a sewerage system is not available.¹¹ There are also special treatment requirements for the Florida Keys.¹² In addition, performance-based treatment systems¹³ must meet specific treatment standards.¹⁴

DEP must inspect septic systems before placing a system into service¹⁵ and approve the final septic system installation before a building or structure may be occupied.¹⁶ If certain alterations¹⁷ are made, system tanks must be pumped and visually inspected.¹⁸ If an existing system was approved within the preceding five years, a new inspection is not required unless there is a record of failure of the system.¹⁹ System repairs must be inspected by DEP or a master septic tank contractor.²⁰

⁶ DOH, *Florida Onsite Sewage Nitrogen Reduction Strategies Study, Final Report 2008-2015*, 21 (Dec. 2015), available at <https://wakullaspringsalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Fla-OSTDS-N-Reduction-Strategies.DOH2015.pdf> (last visited Feb. 2, 2026); See Fla. Admin. Code R. 62-6.006(2).

⁷ University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, *Onsite Sewage Treatment and Disposal Systems: Nitrogen*, 3 (2020), available at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/files/SS/SS55000.pdf> (last visited Feb. 2, 2026).

⁸ DEP, *Nitrogen-Reducing Systems for Areas Affected by the Florida Springs and Aquifer Protection Act* (updated May 2021), available at https://floridadep.gov/sites/default/files/Nitrogen_Reducing_Systems_for%20Springs_Protection_0.pdf (last visited Feb. 2, 2026).

⁹ “Enhanced nutrient-reducing septic system” means a septic system approved by DEP as capable of meeting or exceeding a 50 percent total nitrogen reduction before disposal of wastewater in the drainfield, or at least 65 percent total nitrogen reduction combined from onsite sewage tank or tanks and drainfield. Section 373.469(2)(b), F.S.

¹⁰ See section 373.469(3)(d), F.S.

¹¹ Sections 373.811(2) and 403.067(7)(a)10., F.S.

¹² Section 381.0065(4)(l), F.S.

¹³ “Performance-based treatment system” means a specialized septic system designed by a professional engineer with a background in wastewater engineering, licensed in the state of Florida, using appropriate application of sound engineering principles to achieve specified levels of CBOD5 (carbonaceous biochemical oxygen demand after five days), TSS (total suspended solids), TN (total nitrogen), TP (total phosphorus), or fecal coliform found in domestic or commercial sewage waste, to a specific and measurable established performance standard. Fla. Admin. Code R. 62-6.025(7). If a site restricts home construction because of setbacks or authorized sewage flow, a system can be designed by an engineer to meet strict levels of effluent pollutant reductions. The three levels of performance-based treatment systems are secondary treatment, advanced secondary treatment, and advanced wastewater treatment.

¹⁴ See Fla. Admin. Code R. 62-6.025(11).

¹⁵ Fla. Admin. Code R. 62-6.003(2).

¹⁶ Section 381.0065(4), F.S.

¹⁷ This includes alterations that change the conditions under which the system was permitted, sewage characteristics, or increase sewage flow. DEP approval is required prior to such alterations. Fla. Admin. Code R. 62-6.001(4), F.S.

¹⁸ Fla. Admin. Code R. 62-6.001(4)(b).

¹⁹ Fla. Admin. Code R. 62-6.001(4)(c).

²⁰ Fla. Admin. Code R. 62-6.003(3).

Buildings or establishments that use an aerobic treatment unit or generate commercial waste must be inspected by DEP at least annually.²¹

Septic System Permits

State law requires a person to receive a DEP-approved permit to construct, repair, modify, abandon, or operate a septic system.²² Once received, a permit to construct a septic system is valid for 18 months after it is issued and DEP may provide one 90-day extension. A permit to repair a septic system is valid for 90 days after it is issued.²³

A construction or repair permit for a septic system may be transferred to another person if all information pertaining to the siting, location, and installation conditions or repair of a septic system remains the same and if the transferee files an amended application providing the updated information and proof of property ownership.²⁴ The transferee must file the amended application within 60 days of the transfer of ownership.²⁵

A property owner who personally performs construction, maintenance, or repairs to a septic system serving their own owner-occupied, single-family residence does not have to be registered as a septic tank contractor,²⁶ however they will be subject to all permitting requirements.²⁷

State law prohibits a municipality or political subdivision of the state from issuing a building or plumbing permit for any building that requires the use of a septic system, unless the owner or builder has received a construction permit for the septic system from DEP.²⁸

Septic System Rule Updates

DEP has proposed amendments to the septic system rules²⁹ to ensure proper regulation of septic systems by addressing statutory changes, improving regulatory efficiency, and simplifying and clarifying the rules.³⁰ The rule development addresses requirements for permit application processing, septic system installation and location, abandonment, construction materials, standards for tanks, registration of a septic tank or a master septic tank contractor, renewal of registration certificates, disciplinary standards and penalties for registered persons, certification of partnerships and corporations, and fees related to septic system regulations.³¹ DEP has

²¹ Section 381.0065(4), F.S.

²² *Id.* DEP may issue septic system permits, except that the issuance of a permit to work seaward of the coastal construction control line is contingent upon receipt of any required coastal construction control line permit from DEP.

²³ *Id.*

²⁴ *Id.*

²⁵ *Id.*

²⁶ See chapter 489, part III, F.S., relating to septic tank contracting.

²⁷ Section 381.0065(4), F.S.

²⁸ *Id.*

²⁹ Fla. Admin. Code R. 62-6.

³⁰ Fla. Admin. Register, *Notice of Development of Rulemaking Ch. 62-6* (Nov. 2025), available at <https://flrules.org/gateway/ruleno.asp?id=62-6.004&PDate=11/20/2025&Section=1> (last visited Feb. 2, 2026).

³¹ *Id.*

published draft rules and forms, as well as the agenda and recording from its December 5, 2025, public rule workshop on its website.³²

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

Section 1 amends s. 381.0065, F.S., to create an exception to current law for single-family homes. Specifically, if a building or plumbing permit is for a single-family residence that requires the use of an onsite sewage treatment and disposal system (septic system), a municipality or political subdivision of the state may not require the owner or builder to receive a construction permit from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) for the septic system as a condition of issuing the building or plumbing permit. The owner or builder must provide proof to the municipality or political subdivision that an application for the septic system was submitted when applying for a building and plumbing permit.

The bill also provides that if construction of the septic system commences before the issuance of the permit for the septic system, the property owner or the applicant must assume all legal, financial, and safety liabilities arising therefrom.

The bill also makes conforming changes.

Section 2 amends s. 381.0065, F.S., effective July 1, 2026, to provide that any new rules relating to the use and installation of septic systems that are adopted by DEP³³ do not apply to permit applications submitted within 90 days after the date such rules are adopted.

Section 3 amends s. 380.0552, F.S., to make conforming changes to several statutory citations.

Section 4 amends s. 381.00651, F.S., to make a conforming change to one statutory citation.

Section 5 provides that, except as otherwise expressly provided in the bill, the act will take effect upon becoming a law. Section 2 of the bill will take effect July 1, 2026.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

The bill does not appear to require counties and municipalities to expend funds or further limit their authority to raise revenue or receive state-shared revenues as specified by Article VII, s. 18 of the State Constitution.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

³² DEP, *Water Resource Management Rules in Development: Onsite Sewage Program*, available at <https://floridadep.gov/water/water/content/water-resource-management-rules-development#OSP%20-%20OSTDS> (last visited Feb. 2, 2026).

³³ This is specific to rules adopted by DEP under section 381.0065, F.S., relating to OSTDSs.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

D. State Tax or Fee Increases:

None.

E. Other Constitutional Issues:

None.

V. Fiscal Impact Statement:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

None.

C. Government Sector Impact:

None.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Statutes Affected:

This bill substantially amends sections 381.0065, 380.0552, and 381.00651 of the Florida Statutes.

IX. Additional Information:

A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Changes:

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

CS/CS by Rules on February 24, 2026:

The committee substitute adds that a property owner or applicant for an onsite sewage treatment and disposal system (septic system) permit must assume all legal, financial, and safety liabilities arising from the construction of a septic system if construction commences before the issuance of the septic system permit.

The committee substitute also reduces the period of time before a new rule on septic systems will apply to septic system permit applications. The underlying bill provides a period of 120 days before the rule applies, which the amendment reduces 90 days. It also makes conforming changes.

CS by Environment and Natural Resources on January 20, 2026:

The committee substitute makes clarifying and technical changes to the bill. The amendment clarifies language regarding the exception for single-family homes by changing “notwithstanding paragraph (a)” to “except as provided in paragraph (a).” Further, the amendment changes “onsite wastewater systems” to “onsite sewage treatment and disposal systems” to conform the term to statutory norms.

B. Amendments:

None.