FROM CRISIS TO CAPACITY

Building Sustainable Septage Disposal Solutions Through Collaboration

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NOWRA/NAWT Mega Conference

**The materials presented in this session represent the opinions of the presenter(s) and do not reflect the opinions or positions of NOWRA; the presenter(s) are not acting as experts, and attendees should always consult qualified professionals for guidance specific to their situation.*



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- President, National Association of Wastewater Transporters (NAWT)
- Chairman of the Alliance
- 20+ years in the wastewater and septic industry
- Advocate for sustainable septage disposal infrastructure
- Author, "Ultimate Homeowners Guide"

1 in 4 American Homes Depends on Onsite Wastewater Systems

- Roughly 25% of U.S. households rely on septic or onsite wastewater treatment systems
- Over 60 million people are served by decentralized wastewater systems
- Infrastructure is aging — many systems were installed 30–50 years ago
- Septage pumped from these systems requires proper treatment and disposal

Where Does the Waste Go? Fewer Places Every Year.

- Septage disposal facilities are closing faster than new ones open
- Georgia example: 932,000 GPD generated daily vs. 575,000 GPD available capacity
- Disposal fees exceeding $300 per 1,000 gallons in constrained markets
- Transporters are driving farther, paying more, with fewer options

300,000 GPD
Georgia's daily disposal gap

The Treatment Challenge: Septage is Not Sewage

- Septage is roughly 50x stronger than domestic wastewater
- High concentrations of solids, BOD, ammonia, pathogens, and pharmaceuticals
- Cannot simply be dumped into any municipal system without treatment
- Many WWTPs lack the capacity, equipment, or permits to accept it
- Regulatory inconsistency across states makes multi-state operations complex

Why the Crisis is Getting Worse

- Population growth in rural/suburban areas means more systems and more septage
- Municipal plant closures and consolidations are reducing receiving capacity
- Environmental regulations are tightening without matching infrastructure investment
- Regulators adding maintenance and pumpout requirements without disposal options
- No coordinated national strategy — a patchwork of state-by-state regulations
- Market economics don't support private investment without public partnership

No Single Actor Can Solve This Alone



- Industry: transporters, pumpers, and treatment operators
- Government: municipalities, counties, and state agencies
- Regulators: EPA and state environmental agencies
- Coalition example: NSDCA Task Force (March 2024) — NAWT, NOWRA, PSAI, GOWA, OK DEQ

Modern Technology Makes Treatment Viable

- Gravity belt thickeners — reduce volume, lower hauling costs
- Centrifuges — high-throughput solids separation
- Plate-and-frame filter presses — high solids capture
- Biofiltration systems — odor control and effluent polishing
- Digital manifest and tracking systems — regulatory compliance and chain of custody

Technology Exists

The barrier is policy, funding, and coordination — not capability

Funding Pathways Exist — We Need to Use Them

- State Revolving Funds (SRF) — low-interest loans for wastewater infrastructure
- USDA Rural Development grants and loans
- Federal infrastructure grant programs
- Public-private partnerships: municipalities provide site/permits, operators provide capital/operations

Apply Together

Transporters and municipalities need to apply jointly

It's Working Where People Work Together

Claremore, Oklahoma

Jason's Home Market

- Local collaboration between septic transporters and the municipal WWTP
- Created a receiving solution for the regional market
- Model for rural Oklahoma communities

Warminster, Pennsylvania

- Retrofit investment: approximately $300,000
- Result: profitable septage receiving operation at approximately 7¢/gallon
- Demonstrated that small investment yields a sustainable long-term solution

A Roadmap for Every Community

1. Assess
Map local septage generation vs. receiving capacity; identify the gap

2. Align
Bring transporters, municipal operators, and regulators to the same table

3. Apply
Pursue available funding through SRF, USDA, and federal programs

4. Act
Pilot a small receiving agreement; prove the model; scale it

The crisis is real, but it is solvable.
Communities that act now will have capacity. Communities that wait will have a crisis.

What You Can Do When You Leave This Room

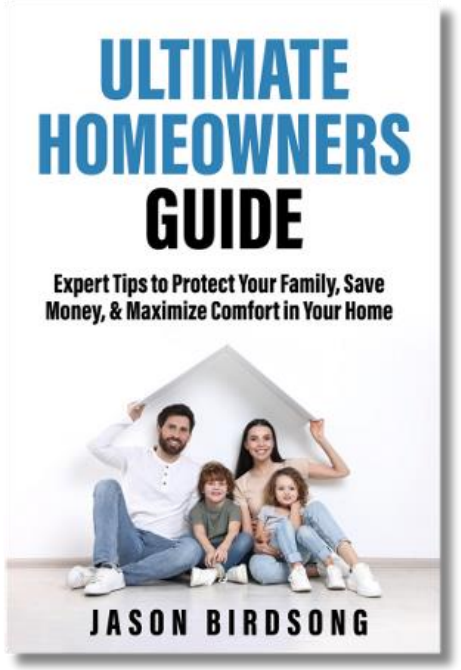
- **Assess** your local disposal landscape — know your gap before it becomes a crisis
- **Reach out** to your municipal wastewater operator — start the conversation
- **Connect** with NAWT and NSDCA for resources, data, and coalition support
- **Apply** for funding — the programs exist, they just need applicants
- **Share** this information — the more stakeholders understand the problem, the faster we solve it

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Ultimate Homeowners Guide

Expert Tips to Protect Your Family, Save Money, & Maximize Comfort in Your Home

By Jason Birdsong



Scan the QR code to get your copy

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Visit NAWT.org for resources on septage disposal infrastructure