

Proper Maintenance of Septic Tank Systems

- **Pump your septic tank regularly** to ensure optimum performance of your system. Failure to pump the tank can cause clogging of the drainfield and subsequent failure of the system. Failing systems contribute to runoff of sewage which contaminates surface water. Use the chart below to estimate the years for pumping your system

Tank size (gallons)	Number of people using the septic tank system				
	1	2	4	6	8
900	11	5	2	1	1
1000	12	6	3	2	1
1250	16	8	3	2	1
1500	19	9	4	3	2

- **Properly use your system:** Disposal of toxic substances in the system can contribute to NPS pollution other than nutrients and pathogens that will degrade ground and surface water quality. Do not throw or dispose in your system chemical wastes such as engine oil, gasoline, pesticides, paints, solvents, and photographic chemicals. Contact your local landfill or toxic waste recycling site to dispose of these chemicals.

Do not use additives in your septic tank: Additives are sold that claim to help the septic tank decompose solids to prevent clogging. In reality, additives do not prevent system failure and rather, can be harmful to bacteria in the septic tank and in the drainfield.

- **Protect your drainfield:** It is important to ensure long life of the drainfield. If the system fails, sewage will surface in the drainfield and can runoff to nearby streams contributing to NPS pollution and posing a health hazard. Keep large trees and shrubs away from the field to prevent any root clogging or crushing the drainfield pipes. Do not drive or pave over the drainfield! The weight of vehicles can crush the pipes of the drainfield,
- **Protect your septic tank:** Keep as many solids out of your septic tank as possible. This ensures optimum performance of the tank and maximizes pumping time. The following items can contribute to a faster solids build-up in your tank:

- Use of a garbage disposal
- coffee grounds
- grease and cooking oils
- sanitary napkins, tampons, or disposable diapers
- cigarettes
- facial tissues or other solid or paper wastes
- cat box litter
- mud and grit from cleaning automobile or machine parts.

- **Reduce the amount of water you dispose in your system:** By reducing the water usage, less water flows into the drainfield. Thus, the drainfield has more time to recover between effluent loads. Save water by turning off the water while doing something that does not require a constant flow of water. Take short showers e.g. less than 5 to 10 minutes. Use low flow fixtures in sinks, toilets, and showers. Run dishwashers and washing machines only with full loads. Repair leaky faucets. Do not empty into the septic tank roof drains, basement sump pumps, and foundation drains.
- **Contact your local health department if you have questions and/or to report failing systems!**