

September 15, 2020

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Be Septic Smart

If your household relies on a septic system for disposal of sanitary sewage, now is a great time to make sure all is properly functioning. Septic systems are typically designed to treat wastewater from your home before it filters into the soil and replenishes the groundwater that feeds local lakes and rivers, and in many cases, drinking water supply wells. So proper function is not only important to avoiding major problems in your household, but also to ensuring clean drinking water and ensuring fishable-swimmable rivers and lakes.

Members of the Connecticut River Stormwater Committee, a regional coalition of 19 municipalities, plus UMass-Amherst, encourage all septic system owners to take the following 5 steps recommended by MassDEP:

- Inspect your system at least once every 3 years. A reputable, permitted septage hauler can advise you on the frequency of pumping needed for your particular household. For homes with garbage disposals, pumping once a year is recommended.
- Limit the use of your kitchen sink garbage disposal and flush only human waste down your toilets. This will keep your system working optimally and reduce the overall frequency of maintenance.
- Properly dispose of hazardous or toxic substances, such as medicines, household chemicals, solvents, etc. These substances are not treated by your septic system and contaminate groundwater.
- Avoid driving over, parking on, or doing construction over your septic tank and system as this can impact proper function.
- Conserve water to reduce the amount of liquid your system has to process, and thereby extend its lifespan.

Pumping a septic tank is critical to ensuring that the system properly treats waste. Accumulated solids at the bottom of a tank can prevent the system from doing its job. If a septic system is not in good working order, it can also flood and cause sewage backup into yards or homes. Pioneer Valley Planning Commission Principal Environmental Planner Patty Gambarini, who facilitates the Connecticut River Stormwater Committee notes, “While you can imagine how harmful raw sewage could be to your property, it is also important to note the harm a faulty septic system can cause to drinking water supply and local waterways.”

More information on maintaining septic systems is available at the state’s website, <https://www.mass.gov/guides/caring-for-your-septic-system>, or the Think Blue Connecticut River website, <https://thinkblueconnecticutriver.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/MaintainingSeptic-Updated-for-PV.pdf>