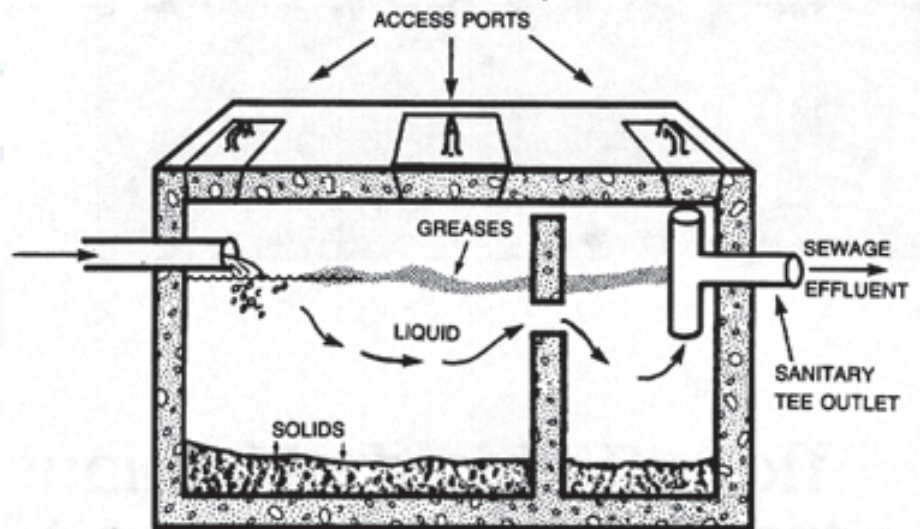


MAINTENANCE IS CRITICAL FOR A WELL FUNCTIONING SEPTIC SYSTEM

Management of your on-site wastewater treatment system (OWTS), commonly known as a "septic tank," is one of the most important responsibilities for a homeowner. A poorly maintained or functioning OWTS can have a significant negative impact on water quality as the system can become a major source of nutrient loading to Lake George. A well designed and well maintained OWTS is highly effective for the treatment of human waste and waste water, as pathogens are filtered out before reaching groundwater, as well as help to protect water quality.

When wastewater is treated by an OWTS, as are many homes around Lake George, homeowners should realize that they are a utility operator and as such are responsible for the operation and maintenance of that utility system. The septic tank is the primary component of the OWTS and both regular pumping and inspection of the tank are necessary and essential parts of the operation and maintenance of a septic tank. Failure

Septic System Maintenance



Cross section of septic tank showing components and treatment functions.

to properly maintain an OWTS can damage the overall system, which could require costly upgrade or replacement, and can quickly negatively impact Lake George.

Septic tanks come in many shapes and sizes and are constructed of different materials. The most common is a precast concrete tank, but tanks are also constructed of plastic and fiberglass. The size of the septic tank is based on the amount of wasteflow, which is determined from the number of bedrooms in the home. The standard septic tank for a typical three bedroom home is 1,000 gallons. The primary function of the septic tank is to settle solids out

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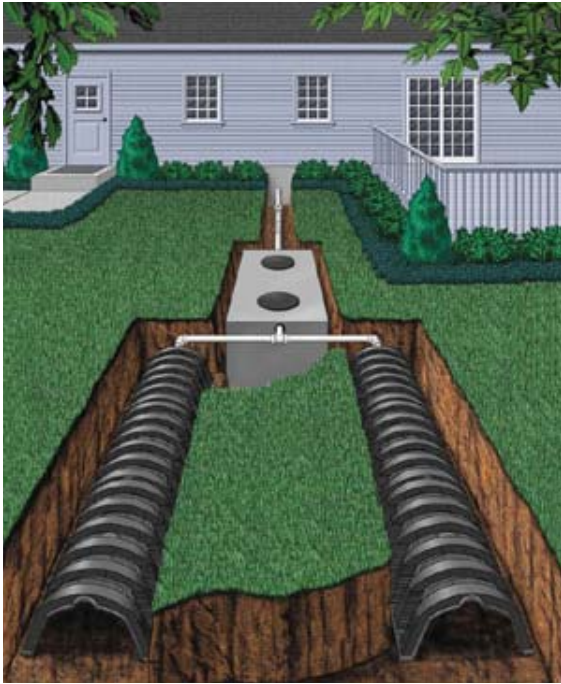


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Schematic layout of functioning on-site wastewater treatment system.

of wastewater, which allows wastewater to flow into absorption fields for treatment. The time required for settling is 36 hours, which over time results in approximately one third of the tank for solid storage. If the solid level is greater than this, there is a greater possibility that solids will migrate out of the tanks and clog the absorption field and prevent proper operation.

KEY POINTS FOR SEPTIC SYSTEM MAINTENANCE

- 1. Know where your septic tank is:**
Have a plan of your septic system and

current permit. If not available, field probing for the tank based on observing the house plumbing. Another option is to use a transmitter that is flushed down your toilet and a receiver is used to locate your tank.

- 2. Routinely pump your septic tank:** Typically, a three bedroom house with average use should be pumped every one-two years; however, this might differ for seasonal residences depending on use. In New York State, only NYS Department of Environmental Conservation permitted septage haulers shall be engaged to pump out septic tanks. To obtain a list of licensed haulers in the Lake George region, you can contact the NYSDEC Regulatory Office in Albany at (518)402-8707 or see a Lake George FACT SHEET on local haulers.
- 3. Inspect tank structurally after pump out:** The structural inspection should look for components and visible failures. A septic tank should contain baffles and/or tees which prevent direct flow through the tank and allows solids to settle out. If present, the effluent filter should be checked on the outlet pipe. The tank should be water tight with no cracks or corrosion to prevent exfiltration of wastewater that can pollute the groundwater and the prevent infiltration that can reduce the tank's storage capacity.
- 4. Inspect tank for water entering after pump out:** During the inspection, there should be no water running in the home. If water is observed to be flowing into the tank during the inspection, this indicates there is a leak in the piping leading to the tank. Water draining back into the tank through the outlet pipe indicates a potential problem with the absorption field being clogged requiring further inspection.

Regular pumping and routine inspection of an OWTS is one of the most important aspects of a property operation and maintenance schedule. Failure to maintain and inspect your tank can result in potential health hazards and aesthetic nuisances due to sewage overflow and/or backup that can result in the replacement of an absorption field that has clogged and no longer functions. Failure to properly maintain an OWTS also contributes to negative impacts for the water quality of Lake George.

