

## Alternative Septic Systems

Alternative septic systems are engineered systems often utilized when soil conditions on a property do not allow for adequate treatment of sewage with a conventional septic system.

Alternative septic systems require additional maintenance beyond what is required for conventional septic systems. These systems should be maintained according to the manufacturer's specifications and documentation submitted as required by the Henrico Health Department.

Based on their maintenance requirements, these systems are not required to comply with Henrico County's Septic Pump-out & Inspection Program. If you have questions regarding an alternative septic system, please contact the Henrico Health Department at 804-501-4530.

## What are the benefits of routine maintenance?

Having your septic system either inspected or pumped out every five years helps protect the health of your family, community and the environment. Maintaining your septic system makes good economical sense because failed systems can cost thousands of dollars to repair or replace. Failing systems can also cause property values to decline.

## Questions?

For information regarding the maintenance of your septic system, please contact us at:

Phone: 804-501-5846

Fax: 804-501-7470

E-mail: [Septic-Systems@henrico.us](mailto:Septic-Systems@henrico.us)

County of Henrico  
Department of Public Works  
Engineering & Environmental Services  
Division  
PO Box 90075

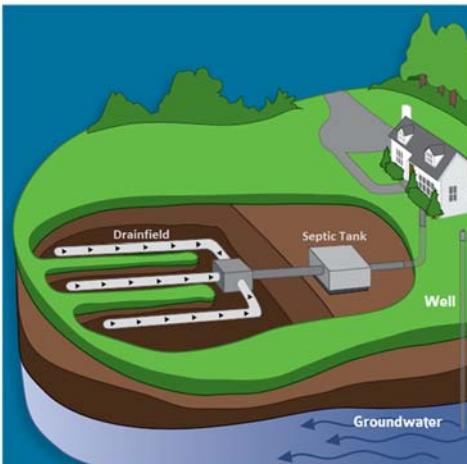
## Maintaining Your Septic System...

to keep our waterways clean.



## What is a septic system?

A septic system is designed to collect, treat and release wastewater from your home. Wastewater flows into your septic tank and separates; heavier solids collect on the bottom and lighter liquids like soap scum, float to the top. The separated water flows out of the tank and into the drainfield where it is eventually absorbed and filtered by the soil. This water is then used by plants or re-introduced into the groundwater table.



(Source U.S. EPA)

## Why should I maintain my septic system?

An improperly functioning septic tank can allow contaminated wastewater to enter surface and groundwater supplies. Failing septic systems can degrade water quality in streams and lakes through bacterial and viral contamination or nutrient overload. Groundwater is the source of drinking water for many people with septic tanks. Preventing drinking water contamination protects your health and the environment.

### It's the law

Henrico County's Chesapeake Bay Preservation Ordinance (Chapter 24-106.3) requires all on-site septic system owners located within a Chesapeake Bay Preservation Area to do one of the following once every five years:

1) pump-out the septic system and submit documentation of the pump-out.

OR...

2) Have a certified operator or on-site soil evaluator inspect the system and submit documentation that the system has been inspected, is functioning properly, and does not need to be pumped out. A list of certified operators and on-site soil evaluators can be obtained from the Virginia Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation's (DPOR) website: <http://www.dpor.virginia.gov/LicenseLookup/>.

## What should I keep out of my drain?

- Do not put grease or chemicals down the drain. They can clog the system or eventually get into the groundwater.
- Avoid septic tank additives. These products are not necessary and may harm your system.
- Conserve water to avoid overloading the septic system. Repair any leaky faucets or toilets.
- Avoid using the garbage disposal. These devices quickly fill your septic system with solids, decrease their efficiency and you will have to pump out your tank more frequently.

### Protect your drainfield

- Do not drive, park or build on top of your drainfield, this could reduce its ability to treat wastewater and may damage drain pipes within the field.
- Avoid planting shrubs with deep root systems or trees near the drainfield as their roots can damage pipes.