

Raritan Headwaters Association

Taking Care of
your Septic

Keeps your
Water Well



Life really
stinks when
your septic
system fails.

Protect your family and the investment you have made in your home. Be a responsible neighbor and a good steward of our natural resources. Take care of your septic system.

It does not take a lot of time, money or effort to keep your septic system functioning properly, keep reading to find out more.

How Septic Systems Work

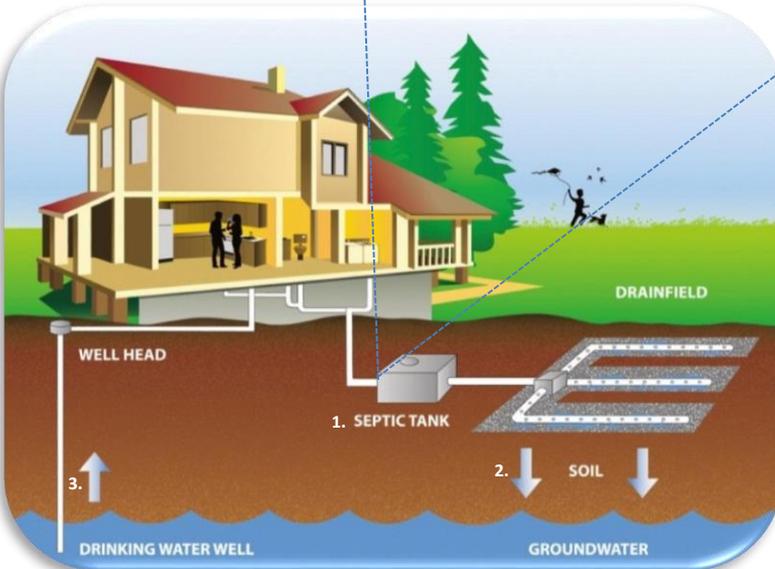
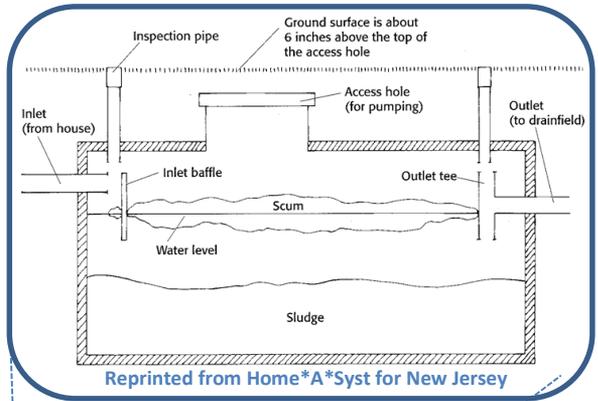


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1. Household wastewater is sent to the septic tank. In the septic tank, sludge and scum settle out and bacteria begin to treat the wastewater.

2. Wastewater is slowly released into the drainfield. From the drainfield, wastewater enters the soil. The bacteria in the soil remove harmful bacteria, viruses and nutrients.

3. The now clean water enters the groundwater which is the source of drinking water via wells or lakes, streams and wetlands.

Life really stinks when your septic system fails. Maintaining your septic system probably isn't something you think about every day, but taking care of it sure does pay off in the long run and make a difference for you, your bank account, your neighbors and the planet.

When a septic system for a typical four bedroom home fails, the cost to repair or replace it can run as high as \$50,000. That is just for the system itself – homeowners incur additional costs to re-landscape the yard where the system is installed. And those costs are really just the beginning...

When a septic system fails, nearby groundwater, drinking water and even surface waters such as streams and ponds can be polluted. Your family's health, as well as the health of your neighbors and the other people who depend on the same drinking water source for their homes, is at risk. The same holds true for the plants and animals who share the water.

Warning Signs of Septic System Failure

- Unpleasant odors
- You notice areas in your yard that remain wet or moist during dry periods
- Your sinks or toilets are backing up
- Your septic tank has not been pumped in five years

If you notice a sign, schedule a septic system inspection immediately.

What You Can Do to Maintain Your Septic System

1

Keep a record of the age, capacity, location of septic tank and drainfield, and dates of prior pumping, inspections and other maintenance for troubleshooting or future sales.

2

Inspect your septic system annually. Have your septic tank pumped when necessary to remove the buildup of scum and sludge (in general, every 3-5 years) by a reputable septic tank service contractor. This will typically cost less than \$500.

3

Protect the helpful bacteria that break down the waste in your septic system. Use only mild cleaners that are “septic safe.” A functioning septic system depends upon the microorganisms that live in your septic tank and soil.

4

Use water efficiently by installing water-saving features in fixtures and appliances. Too much water can overwhelm your septic system.

5

Keep household garbage out of your septic system – don’t use sinks and toilets as trash cans. This behavior can result in the need for more frequent pumping and cause your drainfield to clog.

6

Plant only grasses and native wildflowers over and around your septic system – roots from shrubs and trees can clog and damage your drain field.

7

Keep cars and other heavy vehicles off your drain field to avoid compacting the soil and breaking the pipes, tank and other components of your septic system. Compacted soil will be unable to absorb wastewater for treatment.

8

Test your well water annually.

For more information,
visit www.RaritanHeadwaters.org or call (908) 234-1852


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