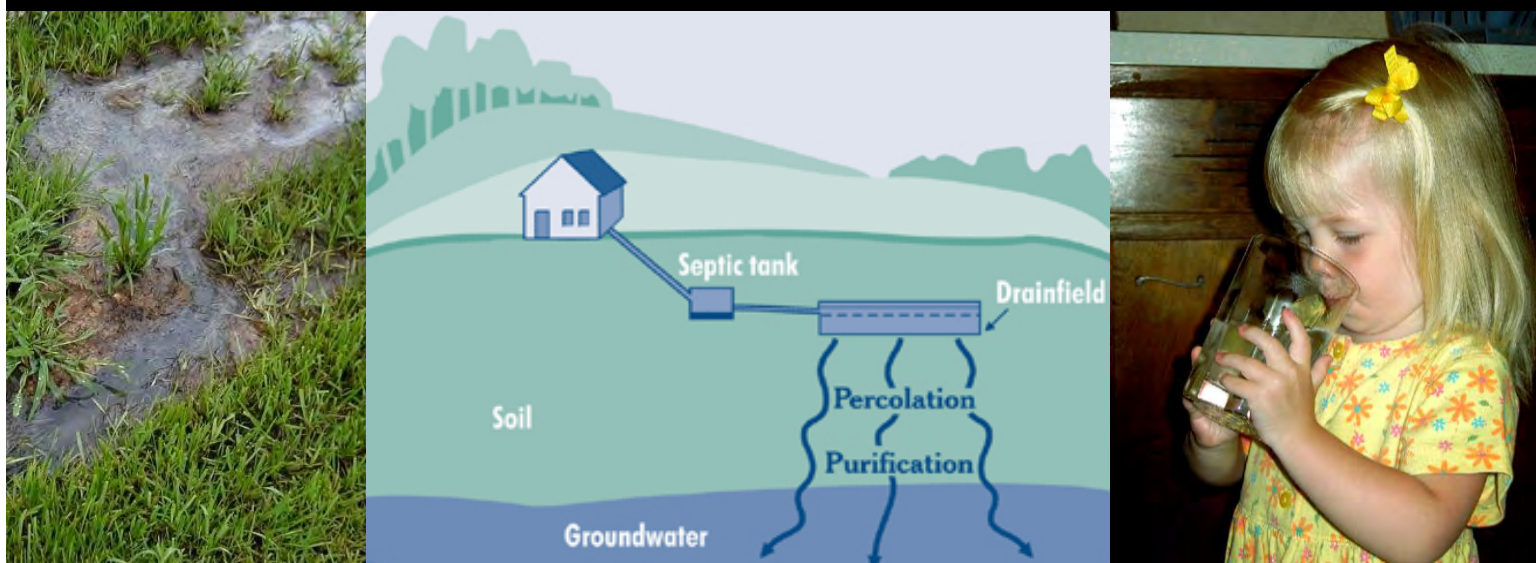


DO YOU KNOW IF YOUR WATER IS SAFE TO DRINK?



Leaky septic systems can pollute our inland lakes, streams and Lake Michigan.

Leaky septic systems may also pollute your drinking water.

Help protect water quality by checking your septic system regularly!

Protect Your Drinking Water

www.pawpaw.net/lake.html

www.TwoRiversCoalition.org

www.vbco.org/natfeat0002.asp

What Can I Do?

Septic Systems and Water Quality

What do you think is the most common source of groundwater contamination in the U.S.?

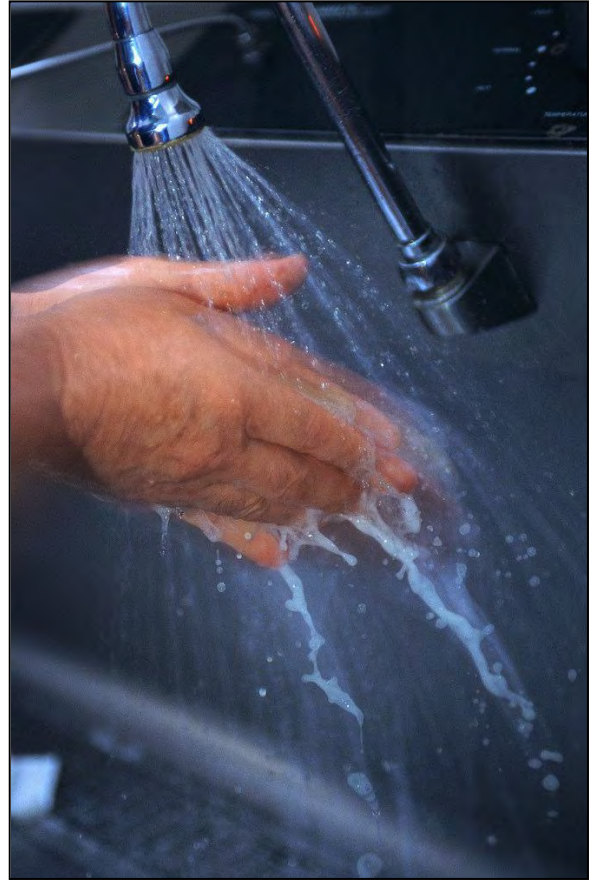
What if we told you that it is also the largest producer of wastewater in the U.S.?

What would your guess be? If you answered septic systems, you guessed correctly!

Septic systems have long been known for bacterial and nitrate pollution of our ground and surface waters. The pollution can affect us all. If septic systems are not maintained properly, the leaching liquid will most likely pollute your drinking water and prevent swimming at nearby lakes and rivers. In addition, high concentrations of nitrates can cause blue-baby syndrome.

Therefore, it is important to properly maintain our septic systems in order to avoid any harmful environmental effects. Primary tips:

- ✚ Do not dispose of household hazardous wastes in sinks or toilets (caustic drain cleaners, chlorine bleach)
- ✚ Do not dispose of items such as dental floss, feminine products, diapers, and cat litter in the toilet
- ✚ Pump the septic tank as needed (contact the County Health Department for recommendations)
- ✚ Do not use septic tank cleaners because the chemicals in these cleaners can be harmful
- ✚ Conserve water (more water puts a strain on the septic system)



For more information on proper septic maintenance and warning signs of failing septic systems visit these web pages:

www.swmpc.org/downloads/Septic.pdf or www.inspectny.com/septbook.htm.

For more information on watersheds in southwest Michigan visit:

www.swmpc.org/water.asp.

Tips for Maintaining your Septic System

Septic system failures can occur when wastewater either breaks out at the surface or seeps into the soils and travels to groundwater sources, contaminating the water and threatening public health. Check with the local health department to ensure a safe distance between a septic tank and a drinking water well in areas where water wells and septic systems are used by homeowners.

☔ **Have a professional pump out the septic tank every three to four years** (depending on the household size the period in between pumps will vary – check with local health department for suggestions). Look in the yellow pages for local septic tank and system cleaning and repair companies.

☔ **Check the system when it begins to back up.**

Possible causes of septic system failure include:

- Tank needs to be pumped
- Tree roots have grown into trenches
- Pipe has burst
- Trenches are too wet due to large amounts of rainfall
- Volume of water used is too high*

*Water volume can be reduced by using low-flow devices, detecting and repairing leaky faucets and toilets, washing larger loads of laundry instead of many small loads, and eliminating other wasteful water use habits.

**For Assistance Contact
Your Local Health
Department:
Van Buren Cass District
Health Department –
Hartford - 621-3143**

Septic System Do's and Don'ts

DO

- ☞ Learn the location of your septic tank and drainfield.
- ☞ Have your septic system inspected annually.
- ☞ Call a professional whenever you experience problems with the system.
- ☞ Keep a detailed record of repairs.
- ☞ Conserve water to avoid overloading the system.
- ☞ Divert sources of water, like roof drains, house footing drains, and sump pumps away from the septic system.

DON'T

- ✗ Go down into a septic tank. Toxic gases are produced by the natural treatment processes in septic tanks and can kill in minutes.
- ✗ Allow anyone to drive or park over any part of the system.
- ✗ Plant over or near the drainfield, except for grass.
- ✗ Dig in your drainfield or build anything over it.
- ✗ Make or allow repairs without obtaining the required health department permit.
- ✗ Allow backwash from home water softeners to enter the septic system.

For additional information visit the U.S. EPA Septic Systems webpage:
<http://cfpub.epa.gov/owm/septic/home.cfm>

keep it BLUE
 only rain in the drain