Septic System Management

Mi Inland Lakes Convention

Mike Stephens, Owner/Operator
“Properly managed decentralized wastewater systems can provide the treatment necessary to protect public health and meet water quality standards, just as well as centralized systems.”

Environmental Protection Agency, April 1997
The 3 M’s

• Maintenance
• Monitoring
• Management
Importance of the 3 M’s

- Components will wear out
- Environment will differ
- Flow & Use will change
- Systems will fail
Management Is the Key

• Insure that the system is operating
• Insure that the system is treating
• Prevent major failures and expensive repairs
Conventional System Maintenance

- Routine tank pumping
- Outlet filter cleaning
- Vegetation control
Outlet Filters
Pump System Maintenance
• Record pump cycles & run time
• Test the alarm system
• Check pump function in AUTO & manual
Dosing Tank

- Check proper float operation
- Clean pump filter
- Look for leaks
- Verify everything is in its proper place
- Check for solids
Drainfield

- Check observation ports
- Walkover entire area
- Flush laterals
Common Maintenance Issues

1. **Lack of Lateral Flushing**
   - Cleanouts not installed
   - Homeowner is unaware

2. **Improper Float Settings**
   - Floats have slipped from their position
   - Dose volumes are too great or too small
   - Improper float for the intended function
Common Maintenance Issues

3. Unsecured or Damaged Lids
   • Safety, Safety, Safety!
   • Homeowner is uneducated or unaware

4. Pump Failure
   • Pump does not stay submerged
   • Improper wiring or voltage
   • Pump ran too often

5. Leaking Tanks or Risers
Septic System Failures
Failure Symptoms

✓ Sogginess/wet spots
✓ Lush vegetation
✓ Sewage backups
✓ Slow/gurgling drains
✓ Strong odors
✓ Black, tarry stone
Early Warning Signs

- Frequent alarms
- Heavy buildup on outlet filter
- Water ponding in trenches
- Pump short-cycling or increased cycles
- Irregular vegetation
Other Septic “Don’ts”

✓ Laundry discharged to lake
✓ Relief / overflow pipes to lake
✓ Septic pump discharged to lake
✓ Sump pump or downspouts discharge into septic system
Questions?

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