

## DEQ Highlights Septic Maintenance Programs During SepticSmart Week



Each year, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) holds [SepticSmart Week](#) with outreach activities to encourage homeowners and communities to care for and maintain their septic systems. SepticSmart Weeks is held the third week of September of every year. This year is celebrated September 17-21, 2018. Governor Ralph Northam has [proclaimed September 17-21](#) to be [SepticSmart Week throughout Virginia](#).

Proper septic system use and routine care are vital to protecting public health, preserving our highly valued groundwater, lakes, streams and waterways, and avoiding costly repairs that can result from neglect. Septic systems treat wastewater from homes and businesses.

In Virginia, the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) provides a variety of funding sources to support residential septic maintenance, repair and installation. These DEQ programs include the [Clean Water Financing and Assistance Program](#), implementation of the [Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act](#) and the [Watershed Program](#). These programs are administered by DEQ, but are carried out at the local level by planning district commissions, soil and water conservation districts, local governments and a variety of non-profits. These locally led programs include tremendous support from the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) and the local health districts.



Residential Septic Management Program Advertisement Sign



Septic System Pump-out

The [DEQ Office of Watershed Programs' Nonpoint Source Management Program](#) works with organizations and localities across Virginia to fund projects that correct failing septic systems or straight pipes. Most of these projects are part of larger watershed restoration and implementation efforts to follow pollutant budgets, or total maximum daily loads (TMDLs). From July 2017 thru June 2018, DEQ provided funding to pump out septic systems, repair or replace failing septic systems, or remove straight pipes from at least 551 homes using \$322,533 from federal Section 319(h) grants, State Water Quality Improvement Act funding and landowner contributions. The grant funds were utilized in ten river basins throughout Virginia.

In the fall of 2018, DEQ's Office of Watershed Programs will work with local partners and organizations to fund residential septic programs in 20 areas throughout the state.

Many of the [implementation projects](#) funded through June 2017 address residential septic issues. For more information about current projects, please contact [npsgrants@deq.virginia.gov](mailto:npsgrants@deq.virginia.gov) or refer to the [Office of Watershed Program's contact information](#) for Regional TMDL Nonpoint Source Coordinators.

DEQ's [Clean Water Financing and Assistance Program](#) provides loan funding for localities to create and manage a local revolving loan program for homeowners to repair or replace their malfunctioning and failing septic systems. These loans are low- to no-interest with flexible repayment terms so the locality can provide low-interest loans to homeowners who wouldn't be able to afford to address these problems otherwise. Some local governments have been able to combine this funding source with other grant programs to be able to provide even better terms (including partial grants).



Septic System Repair

One of the many requirements of the [Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act](#) is a provision that on-site septic tanks must be pumped out every five years. The Bay Act applies to Tidewater Virginia and is administered by 84 localities. For fiscal year 2017, Bay Act localities reported that a total of 23,030 septic systems were pumped across the Bay Act area. Many Bay Act localities also have educational information to encourage homeowners to pump out septic tanks.

The septic work funded by DEQ and other partners has resulted in water quality improvements throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia. These [Water Quality Success Stories](#) include success highlighting the work to address pollution from failing and failed septic system through [Virginia's Nonpoint Source Pollution Program Success Stories](#).

### Resources

- If you need financial assistance to pump out or repair your septic system, please contact your local [Soil and Water Conservation District](#), or [Planning District Commission](#) or contact the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality thru the [NPSgrants@deq.virginia.gov](mailto:NPSgrants@deq.virginia.gov) email address.
- For information about septic funding resources and other information, please contact the Virginia Department of Health's Onsite Sewage and Water Services' [Funding Opportunities](#). More information is available from VDH on [how Septic Systems work](#).
- Hanover County provides [useful information](#) about your septic tank relevant to all Virginians.
- See [EPA's web page](#) specifically describing septic systems and SepticSmart Week. EPA has also created a flyer for SepticSmart Week, which can be found [here](#).
- Download EPA's "[Do Your Part, Be Septic Smart!](#)" presentation (PowerPoint, 13 pp, 2 MB) to learn how a septic system works, how to identify signs of a failing septic system, and for resources for how you can participate in SepticSmart Week
- Don't forget to download a copy of the "[Septic System Outreach Toolkit](#)" from EPA.

# Be SepticSmart!

## Inspect it and Protect It

Regular septic maintenance can save homeowners thousands of dollars.



Septic Smart Messages: Inspect and Protect (above) and Shield Your Field (below)

# Be SepticSmart!



## Shield your field!

Tree and shrub roots, cars and livestock can damage your septic tank and drainfield.

