

## Caring for Your Septic System

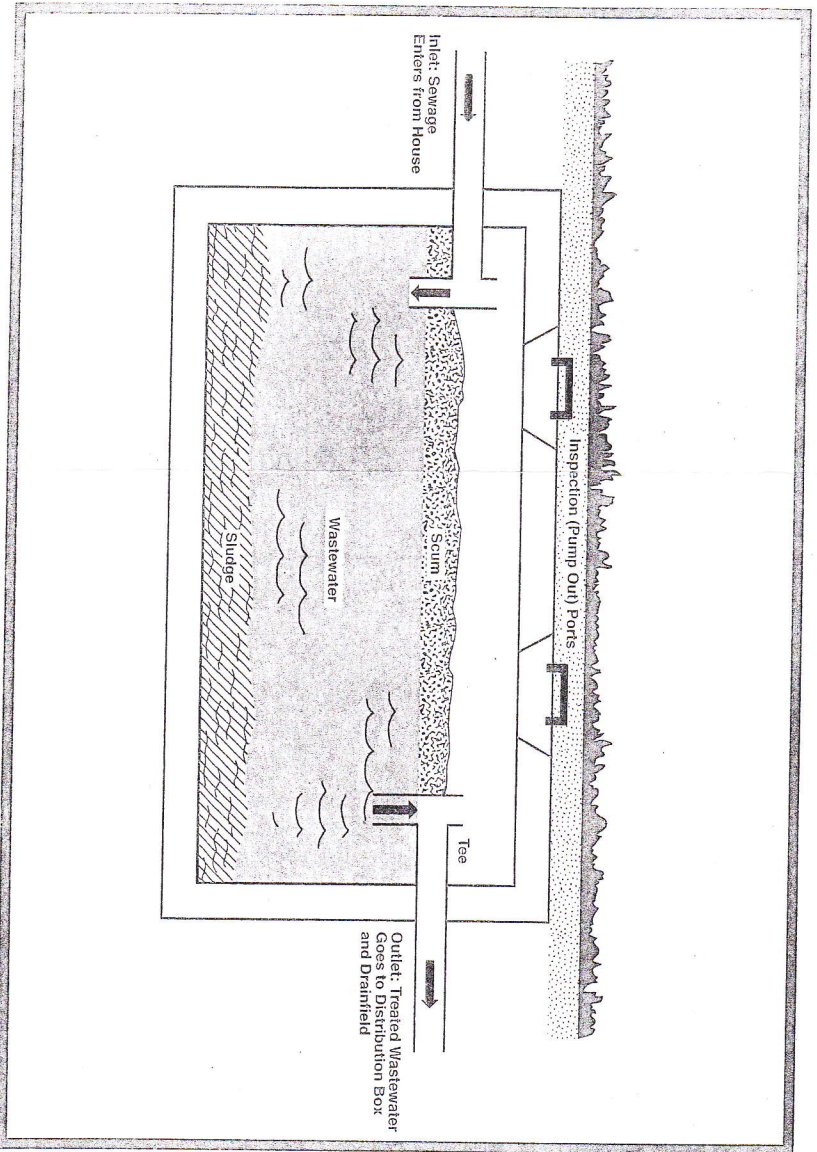
The accumulated solids in the bottom of the septic tank should be pumped out every three to five years to prolong the life of your system. Septic systems must be maintained regularly to continue working.

- Neglect or abuse of your septic system can cause it to fail. Failing septic systems can
  - cause a serious health threat to your family and neighbors,
  - degrade the environment, especially lakes, streams and groundwater,
  - reduce the value of your property,
  - be very expensive to repair, and

- put thousands of water supply users at risk if you live in a public water supply watershed and fail to maintain your system.

Be alert to these warning signs of a failing system:

- sewage surfacing over the drainfield (especially after storms),
- sewage back-ups in the house,
- lush, green growth over the drainfield,
- slow draining toilets or drains,
- sewage odors.



## Tips to Avoid Trouble

- **DO** have your tank pumped out and system inspected every 3 to 5 years by a licensed septic contractor (listed in the yellow pages).
- **DO** keep a record of pumping, inspections, and other maintenance. Use the back page of this brochure to record maintenance dates.
- **DO** practice water conservation. Repair dripping faucets and leaking toilets, run washing machines and dishwashers only when full, avoid long showers, and use water-saving features in faucets, shower heads and toilets.
- **DO** learn the location of your septic system and drainfield. Keep a sketch of it handy for service visits. If your system has a flow diversion valve, learn its location, and turn it once a year. Flow diverters can add many years to the life of your system.
- **DO** divert roof drains and surface water from driveways and hillsides away from the septic system. Keep sump pumps and house footing drains away from the septic system as well.
- **DO** take leftover hazardous household chemicals to your approved hazardous waste collection center for disposal. Use bleach, disinfectants, and drain and toilet bowl cleaners sparingly and in accordance with product labels.