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Waterfront Property = Responsible Ownership

Protect your investment!

How we use the land affects water quality. Recent studies show that the quality of a waterbody affects the value of waterfront property and ultimately the economic health of the local community.*

Protect your recreational resource!

More and more lakes in Maine experience algal blooms (green scum) that discourage swimming, fishing, and boating. Some clam beds are closed due to pollution. Many streams are too warm for some native species of fish. This brochure contains important information for protecting these resources.

* <http://www.state.me.us/dep/blwq/doclake/research.htm>



Important Laws:

The Shoreland Zoning Act

is a State law administered by municipalities with assistance from the state DEP. It establishes a setback of 100 feet on lakes and 75 feet on all other waters, including wetlands, for structures and/or development, such as houses, decks, driveways, etc.

The Shoreland Zoning Act regulates the following activities within 250 feet of lakes, rivers, tidal waters, and wetlands and within 75 feet of streams:

- The uses of lots (e.g. residential vs. commercial)
- The size of new lots
- Earthwork activities
- The expansion of non-conforming (grandfathered) structures
- Cutting and/or removal of vegetation Clearing to create openings is prohibited within 100 feet of a lake or 75 feet of other bodies of water and wetlands.

The Seasonal Conversion Law

requires a local permit for the conversion of a seasonal dwelling, in the shoreland zone, to year-round or principal use.

The Erosion and Sedimentation

Control Law requires all of us to use erosion controls such as silt fence, grass seed, mulch or stone riprap when we conduct earthwork in Maine. The purpose of this law is to prevent soil or sediment from being carried off site and into lakes, streams, wetlands and tidal areas.

The Natural Resources

Protection Act (NRPA) is a State law regulating earth disturbance in, on and within 100 feet of a designated water resource. Permits may be required for work such as excavating, filling, grading, placing riprap, and maintaining or replacing structures (e.g. permanent docks and retaining walls.)



All these laws must be observed when working on land including drive-ways, roads (public and private), and drainage ditches.

If you are planning any type of work in the shoreland zone, contact your town or city's Code Enforcement Officer or (LURC), Land Use Regulation Commission, 287-2631 in an unorganized territory.

For questions about these laws call your nearest DEP office or browse the web:

<http://www.state.me.us/dep/blwq/>



DEP Northern Maine Regional Office
PRESQUE ISLE
Phone: 207- 764-0477
Toll free: 888-769-1053

DEP Eastern Maine Regional Office
BANGOR
Phone: 207-941-4570
Toll free: 888-769-1137

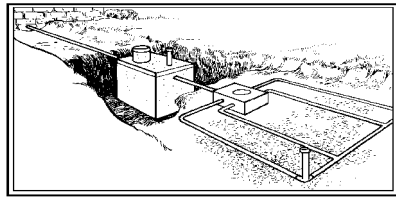
DEP Central Maine Office
AUGUSTA
Phone: 207-287-2111
Toll free: 800-452-1942
(Ask for Bureau of Land and Water)

DEP Southern Maine Regional Office
PORTLAND
Phone: 207-822-6300
Toll free: 888-769-1036



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Got a Septic System? Here Are Some Important Points:



Out of sight, out of mind. That's what many people think after the toilet flushes or the sink drains. But if the system fails, it may show up in your yard or may be polluting nearby water.

System Maintenance

Even if properly maintained, septic systems will generally work effectively for only 15 to 25 years. To help protect against premature failure, you should do the following:

- ◆ Know the exact location of your leach field, and keep it free from root growth and parked vehicles.
- ◆ Have your septic tank pumped out EVERY 3 to 5 years or more frequently for larger families.
- ◆ Conserve Water! Too much water in a septic system may cause solid wastes to flow into and clog leach fields.
- ◆ Stagger laundry days. Too much water can shock-load your system and cause a premature failure.
- ◆ Don't use a garbage disposal.
- ◆ Never dispose of chemicals like paint or petroleum products through drains or toilets.
- ◆ Collect cooking grease in a can and toss grease in the trash, NEVER down the drain.
- ◆ Limit the use and disposal of bleach, disinfectants, and other harsh chemicals.
- ◆ Don't use septic system cleaners.
- ◆ Plan parties and gatherings to include a temporary portable toilet.

System Failures

Some visible signs of a failing septic system:

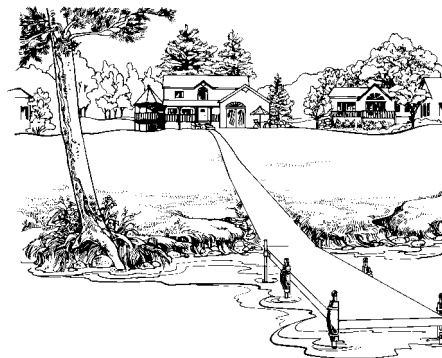
1. Sewage odor near the septic system
2. Standing water over the tank or leach field
3. Slow running drains and toilets
4. A patch of bright green grass over the leach field in winter, or lush green growth over spongy ground in summer.

Unfortunately, systems that are directly polluting nearby surface waters with no visible signs of failure are much harder to identify. Old systems that are located in shallow or sandy soil are of greatest concern.

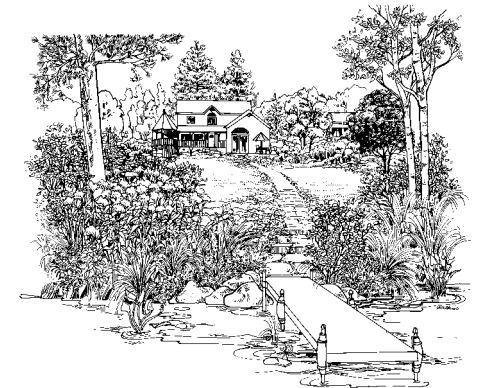
Before purchasing property with a septic system, ask for documentation on the system design and location. Inspect the system location, looking for signs of failure. Consider having the system professionally inspected. If the system is old (20+ years), or any increase in water use on the property is anticipated, the system will likely need replacement.

Stormwater Vegetated Buffers:

Buffers are vegetated landscapes that trap and filter stormwater that otherwise might carry pollution into a waterbody. Good buffer areas are undisturbed forests or other shorefront landscapes of native trees, shrubs, ground covers and duff (fallen or decomposing leaves, twigs, pine needles etc.). These areas should be protected! New buffers should be created on developed sites, particularly along drainage ditches and along shorelines, to help filter polluted stormwater runoff from land use activities.



The large lawn in this yard is a common sight along some shorelines. A manicured lawn provides little filtering capacity when it rains, allowing stormwater to carry fertilizer, pesticides, soil particles and other pollutants into the water.



Here the same yard has been landscaped to create a buffer that both enhances the natural beauty of the property, provides privacy and acts as a filter to trap stormwater pollutants before they enter the water.

Citizen action does make a difference in the health of a waterbody. Grass roots environmental organizations are effective in protecting water quality through action projects, group events and educational programs. Does your lake, stream, wetland or estuary have an environmental organization to monitor or protect water quality? Want to find out more? Check out DEP's Citizen Action page:

<http://www.state.me.us/dep/blwq/group.htm>