



COMMUNICATION PACKET MEMORANDUM

No decisions will be made based on the information provided herein. The memorandum is for informational purposes only.

March 14, 2025
Friday

1. Septic System Education Program Update

MEMORANDUM

City of Springfield, Oregon

Date: 03/14/2025
To: Nancy Newton, City Manager
From: Meghan Murphy
Subject: Septic System Education Program Update

COMMUNICATION PACKET MEMORANDUM

INFORMATION SHARE:

Regular maintenance of septic systems is essential to protecting Springfield's waterways and groundwater supply from harmful bacteria. Within City Limits, about 200 properties are currently connected to septic systems, while all developed properties outside City Limits are served by septic systems. The City, in partnership with Springfield Utility Board (SUB), Rainbow Water District, and Lane County, encourages residents to maintain their septic systems regularly.

The City will be distributing the following educational materials to community members in March and April as a reminder to have their septic systems inspected and pumped out:

- The Property Owner's Guide to Septic System Maintenance brochure will be mailed to septic system owners within the City Limits (ATT 1); and
- The Clean Septic Means Clean Water postcards will be mailed to property owners and residents in the Urban Transition Zone (UTZ), which is the area between the City Limits and the urban growth boundary (ATT 2).

Brochures will be available at the Development & Public Works permit counter at City Hall. This outreach effort is supported by the Groundwater Guardians, a group led by SUB to protect Springfield's drinking water supply.

Regulatory Context

Springfield's 2024 [Total Maximum Daily Load Implementation Plan](#) (TMDL IP) for bacteria requires the City to deliver outreach materials to property owners with septic systems twice during the current five-year cycle to encourage regular pump-outs and inspections. This mailing fulfills the first required outreach effort in this cycle.

This mailing also supports requirements within Springfield's Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) [General Permit](#) for public education and outreach. The City provides certain MS4 permit services for Lane County in the UTZ through an intergovernmental agreement (IGA), which includes public education efforts to protect local waterways and the McKenzie and Willamette rivers.

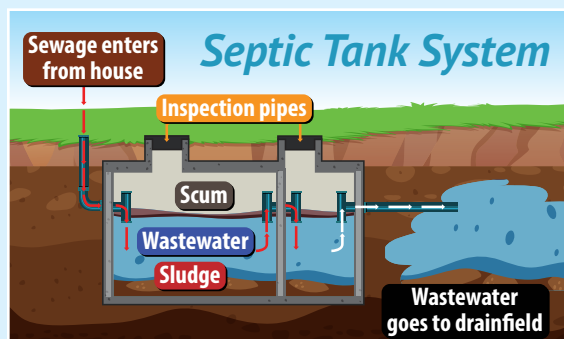
For more information, please contact Meghan Murphy at 541-744-3385.

Attachments

1. Property Owner's Guide to Septic System Maintenance
2. Clean Water Means Clean Septic Postcards

What is a septic system?

A septic system is an underground wastewater treatment structure that uses a combination of natural processes and time-tested technology to treat wastewater from household plumbing such as the bathroom, kitchen, and laundry room.



Why should you maintain your septic system?

Taking care of your septic system is a smart investment for your home, health, and community. Here's why:

Keeps you and your neighbors healthy

A well-maintained septic system filters harmful bacteria, viruses, and pollutants from your household wastewater. This helps prevent contamination of nearby surface water and groundwater, protecting your family, pets, and neighbors from the spread of disease.

Saves you money

Regular maintenance costs are a fraction of what you'd spend to repair or replace a failing septic system. Staying ahead of problems keeps your budget intact and your system running:

Regular septic maintenance
\$250-\$600 every 3-5 years



Repair or replace septic
\$3,000-\$30,000

Protects your property value

A malfunctioning septic system can drag down your property value and make selling your home a challenge. Keeping your system in good shape helps preserve your biggest investment.

Protecting drinking water

Most of Springfield's drinking water comes from groundwater, pumped up through wells across the city. A poorly maintained septic system can contaminate this groundwater or nearby waterways, creating serious health risks.

To protect our water, **Springfield Utility Board, Rainbow Water District, and the City of Springfield** work with Springfield property owners and community members to ensure septic systems are maintained. Proper maintenance prevents harmful bacteria, nutrients, and pollutants from entering our water supplies.

As proud **Groundwater Guardians**, we're committed to safeguarding Springfield's water for everyone. Your actions help protect this vital resource.



More septic resources

Lane County On-Site Wastewater

541-682-3754

www.lanecounty.org/wastewater

Oregon Dept. Environmental Quality

Onsite Wastewater Management Program:

oregon.gov/deq/Residential/Pages/Onsite.aspx

Environmental Protection Agency

SepticSmart Homeowners:

epa.gov/septic/septicsmart-homeowners

Loans for failing septic systems

Loans are available through a partnership of the nonprofit lender Craft3 and the Oregon DEQ:

888-231-2170 ext. 125

CleanWater@craft3.org, Craft3.org/CleanWaterOre



STORMWATER TEAM
City of Springfield, Oregon

SpringfieldStreams.org • 541-726-3694

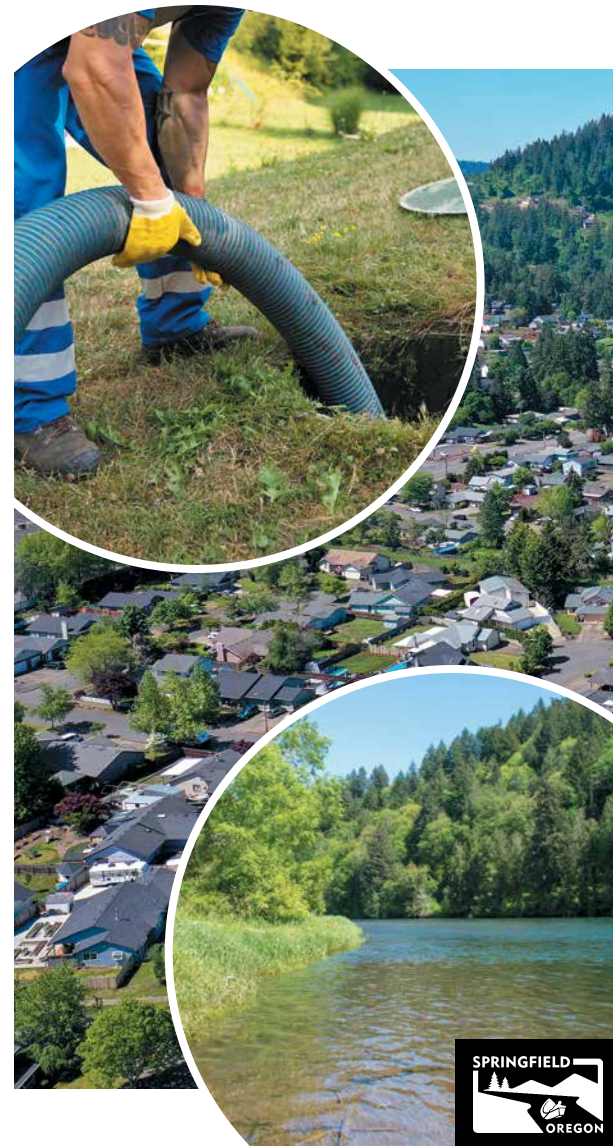
WaterResources@springfield-or.gov

ATT 1 Property Owner's Guide to Septic System Maintenance

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Property Owner's Guide to SEPTIC SYSTEM MAINTENANCE

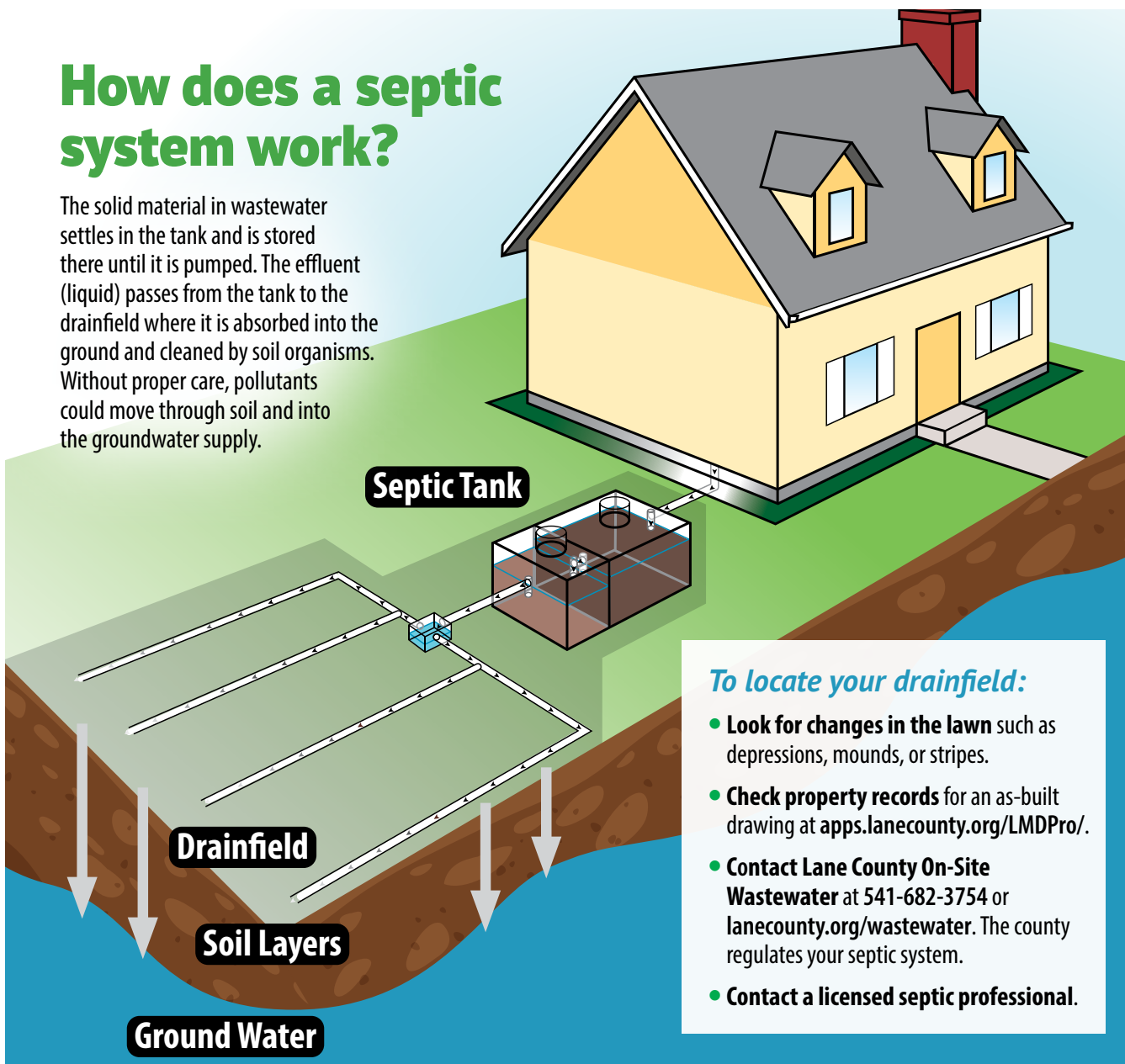
Maintaining your septic system avoids costly repairs and helps keep the McKenzie and Willamette Rivers clean.



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How does a septic system work?

The solid material in wastewater settles in the tank and is stored there until it is pumped. The effluent (liquid) passes from the tank to the drainfield where it is absorbed into the ground and cleaned by soil organisms. Without proper care, pollutants could move through soil and into the groundwater supply.



To locate your drainfield:

- **Look for changes in the lawn** such as depressions, mounds, or stripes.
- **Check property records** for an as-built drawing at apps.lanecounty.org/LMDPro/.
- **Contact Lane County On-Site Wastewater** at 541-682-3754 or lanecounty.org/wastewater. The county regulates your septic system.
- **Contact a licensed septic professional.**

Recommended septic system maintenance

- **Inspect your system at least once a year** for obvious signs of damage from the tank to the drainfield. If unsure, hire a licensed professional.
- **Pump your tank** to remove solids about every three to five years. The frequency depends on the size of the tank and number of people in the household (see table at bottom left).
- **Conserve water and avoid using a garbage disposal** and your tank will need to be pumped less often.
- **Use septic-safe toilet paper** that dissolves quickly.
- **Practice proper disposal.** Keep harsh chemicals, oil, grease, and pharmaceuticals out of your drains. They may kill the beneficial bacteria in your system, cause clogs, and pollute groundwater.
- **Keep accurate records** of your septic system including the design, installation, location, inspections, pump-outs, and repairs.
- **Cover the drainfield with grass** to prevent erosion and don't plant trees or shrubs nearby because roots can clog the system. Don't drive, build, or pave over the tank or drainfield.
- **Watch for signs of failure** such as slow drains, wetness or pooling over the drainfield, a backup of sewage inside the house, or a strong odor.

SEPTIC TANK PUMPING FREQUENCY


Tank Size	1 Person	2 People	3 People	4 People	5 People	6 People
1,000 gal.	6 yrs	6 yrs	4 yrs	3 yrs	2 yrs	2 yrs
1,250 gal.	8 yrs	8 yrs	5 yrs	3 yrs	3 yrs	3 yrs
1,500 gal.	9 yrs	9 yrs	6 yrs	4 yrs	3 yrs	3 yrs

NOTE: Pumping frequencies are approximate. SOURCE: LCOG & OSU Extension Service.

Regular maintenance prevents failure and costly repairs

How often your tank needs to be inspected and pumped depends on the size of the tank and the number of people using it. Septic contractors can inspect your system, likely for free, and advise you

if pumping is needed or if it can wait another year. Hire a septic tank pumper licensed by the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality: oregon.gov/deq/Residential/Pages/Onsite.aspx.



CLEAN SEPTIC *means* CLEAN WATER

Springfield cares about your health and your property.



Septic Owner Benefits

of a maintained home septic system:

- ▶ Keeps pollutants out of your groundwater supply.
- ▶ Preserves Oregon rivers and streams where you play and fish.
- ▶ Prevents costly septic problems in the long run:

Regular septic maintenance
\$250-\$600 every 3-5 years



Repair or replace septic
\$3,000-\$30,000



*City of Springfield, Environmental Services Division
Attn: STORMWATER TEAM
225 Fifth Street, Suite 101
Springfield, Oregon 97477*

Septic Owner Tips

- 1 Pump your tank about every 3-5 years:

SEPTIC TANK PUMPING FREQUENCY (approximate)

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- 2 Watch for signs of failure such as slow drains, a strong odor, wetness or pooling over the drainfield, or a backup of sewage in the house.
- 3 Know the location of your drainfield. Don't drive, build, pave or plant trees over it because that damages the system or causes clogs.

We help you keep Springfield's rivers clean.

STORMWATER TEAM • City of Springfield, Oregon • 541-726-3694
WaterResources@springfield-or.gov • SpringfieldStreams.org

LANE COUNTY ON-SITE WASTEWATER • 541-682-3754
LaneCounty.org/wastewater



CLEAN SEPTIC *means* **CLEAN WATER**

***Help preserve the septic system
you rely on every day.***

ATT 2 Postcards
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Renter Benefits

A maintained home septic system:

- ▶ **Keeps pollutants out of your groundwater supply.**
- ▶ **Preserves Oregon rivers and streams where you relax, play, and fish.**
- ▶ **Prevents the inconvenience of being unable to flush or use a drain while your septic system is repaired or replaced.**



***Springfield cares about
your health and home.***

STORMWATER TEAM

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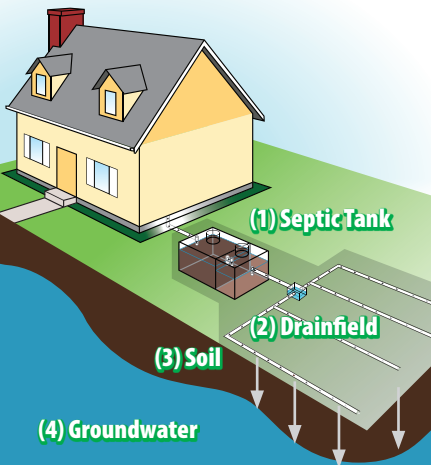
Septic-Smart Renter Tips

- 1 Practice proper disposal.** Keep harsh chemicals, oil, grease, and pharmaceuticals out of drains. These can kill the beneficial bacteria in the septic system, cause clogs, and pollute groundwater.
- 2 Shield the field.** Don't drive, build, or pave over the tank or drainfield. Keep the drainfield covered with grass and don't plant trees or shrubs nearby because roots can clog the system.
- 3 Watch for signs of failure and report them to your landlord.** Wetness or pooling over the drainfield, a backup of wastewater inside the house, or a strong odor around the tank or drainfield can all be signs of failure.



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How Home Septic Works



Your wastewater flows down the drains in your kitchen, bathroom, laundry room, and other areas, then to a **(1) septic tank** buried in your yard. Solid material in the wastewater settles in the tank and is stored until it is pumped. Liquids pass from the tank to the **(2) drainfield** where they soak into the ground and are cleaned by **(3) soil** organisms. Without proper care, pollutants could move through soil and into the **(4) groundwater** supply, where most of Springfield's drinking water comes from.