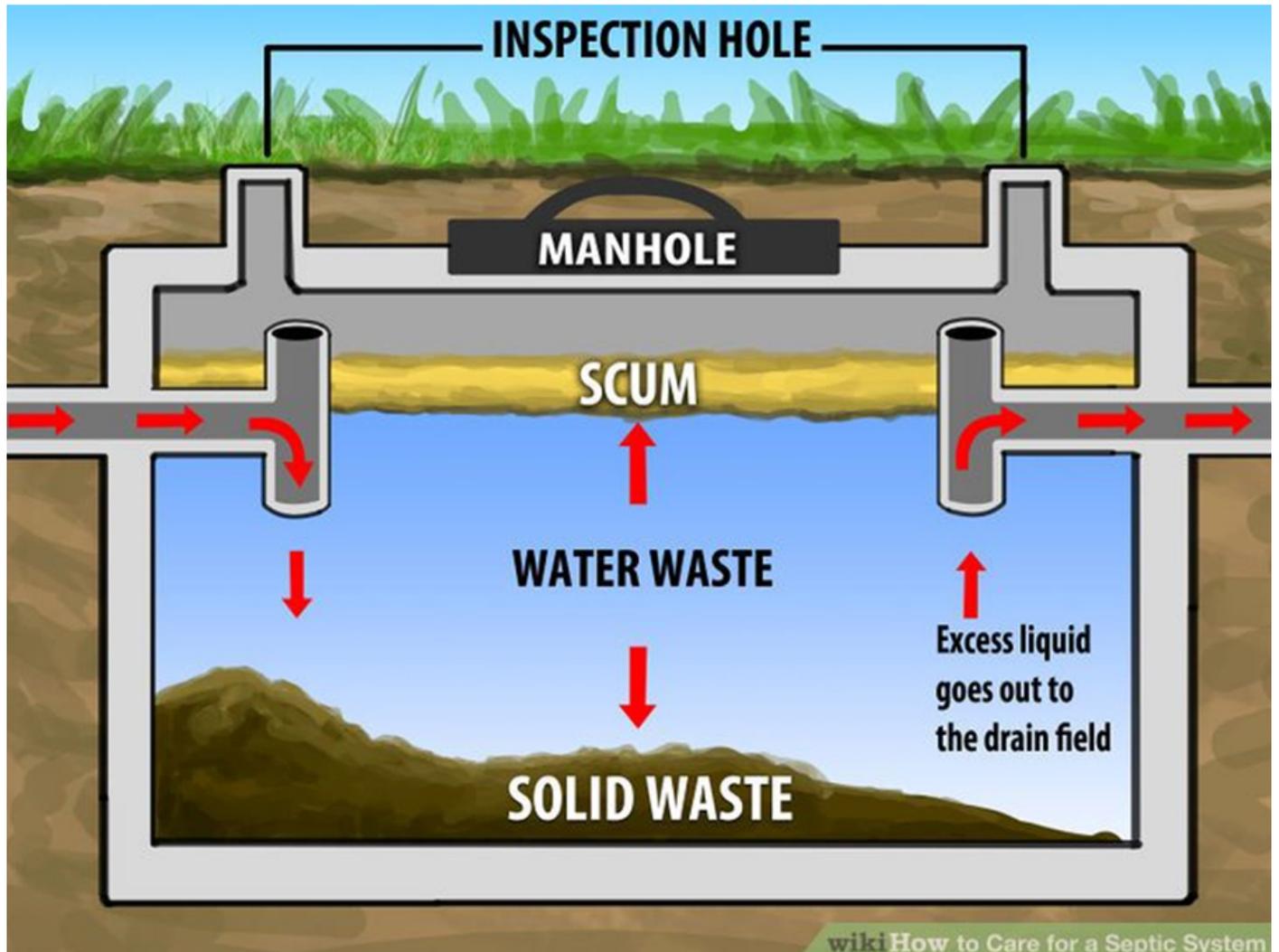


Wise Water Words, Check Your Septics In September

September 1, 2016



September begins a new month and a new series of Wise Water Words from OSFR about how we can all help our water, whether it be on the surface or down in the ground/limestone. For those of us in a rural area, especially those in a high aquifer recharge area, having a healthy septic is very important to our water quality. Agriculture, lawn fertilizers and septic tanks are the

primary sources of excessive nitrogen and phosphorous in our water.

Our thanks go to Media Committee Chair Patty Street of OSFR who provided the following information.

Comments by OSFR historian Jim Tatum.

-A river is like a life: once taken, it cannot be brought back-

Take some time this month to consider your septic tank as it is possible it may need maintenance or pumping. If your septic tank and its drain field are faulty, nasty elements could be leaking into our aquifer.

Septic Tank Basics

A septic tank's job is to separate solids from wastewater. It will store and decompose as much solid material as possible, while remaining liquid (effluent) is sent out to the drain field.

Wastewater comes from your toilet, bath, kitchen, and laundry. It flows into the tank and remains there for about 24 hours before passing out into the drain field. This helps prevent clogging of the drain field, which leads to failure of your septic system.

Good Septic Tank Maintenance

Tips

Conserve Water

Your septic tank can only handle so much water at a time; it needs time to separate solids and liquids and then send liquids to the drain field.

- take showers rather than baths
- fix leaky faucets
- purchase toilets and shower nozzles that reduce water flow
- spread out laundry use – don't do it all in one day

Flushing and Cleaning

Anything non-biodegradable can clog your tank and drain field. Harsh chemicals and detergents kill the bacteria in your tank that help break down solids and can seep into the soil and contaminate ground water.

Use environmentally safe soaps and cleansers as much as possible. Here is a list of no-no's:

- diapers
- dental floss
- feminine hygiene products
- cigarette butts
- cat litter
- Kleenex
- cotton swabs
- coffee grounds
- paper towels
- household chemicals
- gasoline
- grease–includes bacon fat, oils, etc.
- paint

- bleach

Avoid garbage disposals. If you have one, use it sparingly. It can clog the drain field and leads to more waste water. You should have your tank pumped more often if you use one. (Throw those kitchen scraps in your compost bin!)

How often you have your tank pumped depends on the size of the tank and the number of people in your household. The figures we see the most are every three to five years.

Here are some recommendations for additives that could help with septic tank maintenance by enhancing bacteria growth, but opinions vary so no guarantees:

- pour a half gallon of spoiled buttermilk down your toilet every few months
- pour a packet of yeast dissolved in a glass of hot water down your toilet every month
- use a commercial product such as Rid-X