

Lake Association News

GREATER JEFFERSON GERMAN LAKES ASSOCIATION

BE NICE TO YOUR SEPTIC SYSTEM

Website: <http://jgla.org> Email: lakeassociation@hickorytech.net

Doug Malchow of the University of Minnesota Extension office made two presentations to property owners recently. Approximately 60 persons attended.

He explained how microbes and bacteria are the key to the treatment of waste in any septic system.

Anerobic bacteria start the treatment of waste in the septic tank.

Aerobic bacteria in the drainfield continue the treatment.

The final treatment is done by bacteria in the soil between the drain tile and the water table.

At each stage we need bacteria. These bacteria need time to do their job.

How can we help these bacteria be effective?

Limit the amount of water going through the system so that bacteria have enough time to work before the waste water is passed to the next phase of treatment. Don't run unnecessary water through the system. For example, water from the water softener, leaky faucets, dehumidifier. Don't run water during tooth brushing or shaving. Take showers instead of baths and keep them short.

Don't put things down the drain that kill the bacteria. This includes bleach, anti-bacterial soap, toilet bowl disinfectants, chlorine treated water from hot tubs, paints, solvents, or antifreeze.

Make sure there is 36 inches between the bottom of your drainfield and the water table. That gives the soil bacteria time to finish the treatment job.

Don't be fooled into thinking you don't have any "problems" just because you flush and the system does not back up. Doug reminded us that it is a "problem" if your septic system does not completely treat the contaminants in the waste water. Those contaminants go somewhere, either to the lake or into the ground water.

Be sure to pump your tank at least every 3 years. It not only removes the solids, but also allows an inspection to be sure there are no cracks in your tank.

Finally, don't use starters, feeders, cleaners or other septic system additives. These are either unnecessary or can actually be harmful to your system.

For more information go to: <http://septic.umn.edu>.

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Fall Meeting

Saturday, November 17, 2012
St. Paul's Lutheran Church
German Lake
10:00 A.M.

This is your chance to raise questions and concerns, as well as a time to point out opportunities for improvement around the lake.

You don't need to be a member of the Lake Association to attend. We hope you can come.

"How do you explain the paradox of why people love lakes, but continue to do things that ruin them?"

Letters and Opinions

Letters and emails:

Thank you for all your letters and updates. We appreciate all the information. You're doing a great job!
George and Janelle Bauer (Cape Horn Road)

Responses to the news about cows in the lake:

Thanks for the information and you did a good job! Pat Peterson (Big Jeff)

Good job, Buster and everyone else that worked on this. And a big thank you to the farmers.
Theresa Johnson (West Jeff)

Wow, all good news. Thanks a lot! Lou Pape

Low Water Cleanup

Hi, Buster!

Don't know if it is worthy of newsletter material, but it made me think others may wish to follow my lead... I took advantage of the beautiful weather today and the fact that the lake is lower than I have seen it since owning our property, and was able to pick up a full garbage bag of trash from around my own and my surrounding neighbors shorelines! From rusty cans to broken bottles and plastic cups to worn out water toys, I was able "go green" and clean up what would end up back in the lake when the water levels return. If we all do even a little, it will make a difference!

Connie Phillips

Great idea and thanks for starting it Connie! Linda Connors

Great suggestion.

Thanks for the input I will make the same suggestion to our property owners.

Bruce Klugherz

Lake Washington

I did the same clean up this past weekend.

Sue Smilth

Hey Buster, with the water level so low, now is the time to get those boat passes dug out. Steve was working on getting those permits several years ago...any progress? Get-em done. Don Jackson

From the editor

The Septic Inventory Survey is completed. Now what?

The first order of business after the final report is in will be to determine who will analyze the data and create strategies for a long term solution. It appears we have three options:

1. Currently the county board is also acting as the Sewer Board for the Jefferson-German chain of lakes. The primary advantage of this option is that the county has the credit rating to borrow money to pay for a solution. They also have paid counsel and staff who have experience in dealing with the various sources of government funding and government regulations.
2. The County Board could appoint a new Advisory Board. Originally, the board set up a Sewer Advisory Board made up of lake residents to study the problem and bring recommendations to the County. This gives the lake residents a formal path for input, but no real power. Last time, after hours and hours of meetings, the Advisory Board announced to the county that they were ready to make a recommendation to the County Board. However, before the date of the scheduled presentation, the County Board pulled the plug on the whole project without even listening to the recommendations.
3. The Lakes could set up their own Sewer Board. This would give the power to tax and to make decisions to those who are most closely affected. It would also mean a need to hire expertise. In addition, there could be issues with borrowing money with the sewer district having no credit history.

Whoever the Waste Management Board is, there are critical decisions to be made, starting with what do we do about the over 300 properties that were not tested? Options (with rough totals of the possible results):

1. We could assume all are non-compliant. (338 added to the 135 equals 473 total)
2. We could assume that all are compliant. (0 plus 135 equals 135)
3. We could assume the same level of compliance in the non-inspected property as there was in the inspected ones. (135 plus 135 equals 270)
4. We could require mandatory periodic inspections of all septic systems. (135 plus ? equals something between 135 and 270)
5. We could say it doesn't matter how many more are non-compliant. Fixing 135 systems at a minimum is enough to determine that we need a bigger solution than just fixing each system individually.

Wastewater Management Board

There needs to be a new name for the Sewer Board. This name implies that the solution is a City Sewer system (a pipe). While we know that is one option, the final solution could also be 100% septic systems, or even a combination of individual systems in some areas, clusters in others, and a sewer pipe in others. I would suggest that the name should be "Wastewater Management Board".



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
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DECENTRALIZED WASTEWATER TREATMENT CAN PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT, PUBLIC HEALTH, AND WATER QUALITY



Decentralized wastewater treatment systems can protect the environment, public health, and water quality in homes and communities by:

- *providing reliable wastewater treatment,*
- *reducing conventional pollutants, nutrients, and emerging contaminants, and*
- *mitigating contamination and health risks associated with wastewater.*

HOW CAN DECENTRALIZED WASTEWATER TREATMENT PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT, PUBLIC HEALTH, AND WATER QUALITY?

Providing reliable wastewater treatment
– Decentralized wastewater treatment systems can offer as much public health and environmental protection as centralized treatment systems. Like centralized treatment, decentralized treatment systems must be properly designed and constructed and well maintained. More than ever, these systems typically include good monitoring and backup that help prevent adverse discharges. The modern decentralized treatment system is as reliable as other wastewater treatment alternatives, and it is also a cost-effective and sustainable method of treatment for communities.

Reducing conventional pollutants, nutrients, and emerging contaminants
– Decentralized treatment can produce effluent quality that is equal to or higher than other wastewater disposal options. These decentralized systems use the same advanced treatment technologies as discharging systems. Since they use the treatment capacity of the soil, they achieve high quality treatment at a lower cost than other options. Cluster systems, also called community systems, allow for centralized management of the wastewater via contract by a third party – a Responsible Management Entity (RME). Communities can enter into agreements with nearby public utilities or local cooperatives to create public private partnerships to provide management for decentralized wastewater treatment.

Mitigating contamination and health risks associated with wastewater – Sewage pathogens cause many human illnesses, including aseptic meningitis, cholera, dysentery, encephalitis, gastroenteritis, infectious hepatitis, and typhoid fever. Using decentralized systems allows for multiple layers of treatment including, advanced treatment and disinfection which can help mitigate the risk of human exposure and disease transmission. Small systems in single family homes can include secondary treatment from a variety of treatment technologies (e.g., aerobic treatment, recirculating filters, etc.). Larger neighborhood systems may be designed using high-level treatment and pressure dispersal of highly treated wastewater to utilize marginal soils. Therefore, decentralized systems can be designed to overcome the potential health risks posed by septic systems in areas often considered unsuitable for development because of limited permeability, limited vertical depths and high water tables.

The EPA Decentralized Wastewater Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Partnership, created in 2005, has served as an ongoing cooperative relationship between the EPA and Signatory Organizations to effectively and collaboratively address management and performance issues pertaining to decentralized systems.

Cannon Connections – October 2012 – by Beth Kallestad

When you turn on the tap for a glass of water does it come out full of suds or clear? Have you seen the Cannon River or the Mississippi River burst into flames lately? Without actually checking everyone's taps I'd wager that the water you are drinking is free of suds and to the best of my knowledge our rivers haven't been ablaze. Why am I even asking these weird questions? Forty years ago these things did happen. The levels of water pollution had gotten so bad in the late 1960's and early 1970's that something had to be done. The Clean Water Act was a landmark piece of legislation that was passed by Congress, vetoed by President Nixon and then overridden by a landslide in Congress on October 18, 1972 and is now marking its 40th Anniversary. This rule set out standards for the waters of our nation with objectives and goals for the conditions they should be in. It provides the guidelines for states with regard to regulating sewage and industrial waste and other pollutants that affect our waters. Wetlands are protected under the Clean Water Act through "dredge and fill" permits. The Act has been revised a few times adding provisions for stormwater runoff, groundwater protection and dealing with toxic pollutants. In a 1958 memo the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources stated that the Cannon River near Faribault was uninhabitable for fish due to all the industrial pollution. That same river now boasts some 42 species of fish. We've come a long way! We are treating our sewage, industrial discharges and doing a better job with urban stormwater runoff. But we still have a ways to go. Our stormwater management is good but it could be better. There is still pollution coming from our farm fields and other land areas - referred to as nonpoint source pollution. The Clean Water Act has very little teeth when it comes to this type of pollution. But with or without regulation, we have the ability, technology, and know how to make some substantial improvements. It's going to take hard work, compromise and financial resources but I know we can do it. I hope when I'm an octogenarian and we are celebrating the 80th Anniversary of the Clean Water Act we'll be able to say that our waters now truly meet the Clean Water Act's goal of fishable and swimmable water. Want to help? Contact me at the Cannon River Watershed Partnership and we'll find a way for you to pitch in.

Check out some interesting history and a short video by former Congressman Jim Oberstar on the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency website.

<http://www.pca.state.mn.us/index.php/about-mpca/mpca-news/featured-stories/clean-water-act-anniversary/copy-of-clean-water-act-images-from-the-past.html>

"Lake Watch" alerts

So far we have 259 valid email addresses who have signed up for our "Lake Watch" email alerts. Thanks for your interest.

If you are not receiving alerts, please let me know.

"Lake Watch" email list. Contact the Lake Association if you would like to be on the "Lake Watch" list. lakeassociation@hickorytech.net or buster@hickorytech.net

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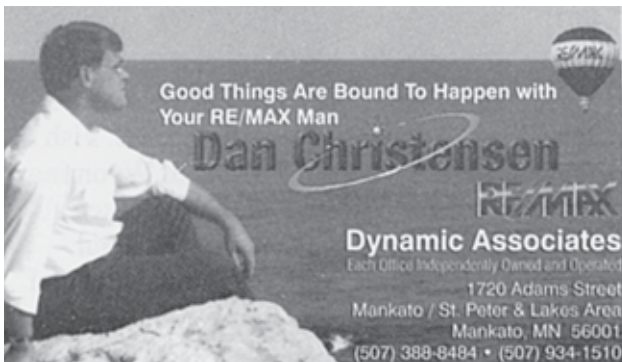
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The Box Medication Collection Program

Frequently Asked Questions

How should I get my medicine ready to drop off in The Box?

Medicine should be left in their original container with the label. If the medicine is a prescription, use a marker to cross off your name. Leave all other information on the container.

What kinds of medicine can go into The Box?

Any prescription and over-the-counter medicine for both humans and animals can be placed in **The Box**.

What about syringes, needles or "sharps"?

No! These items should NOT go in **The Box**.

Place syringes, etc., in an empty hard liquid laundry detergent bottle. When half full, securely tape the lid onto the bottle. Label the bottle clearly with "Sharps" or "Syringes." Place the bottle in your regular trash container- not with your recycling.

Can "inhalers" be put in The Box?

Yes. Inhalers used with various medicines can be dropped in **The Box** for disposal.

Household chemicals like glues, paints and other inhalants can be used to get high. Can these chemicals go in The Box?

No. You are encouraged to store these kinds of chemicals in a safe, out-of-reach location. Contact Le Sueur County Environmental Services for disposal information. 507-357-8538

Can illegal drugs and drug paraphernalia, such as pipes and other objects, be put in The Box?

Yes. For privacy, items can be put in a paper bag or other container before dropping them into the disposal box. The opening of **The Box** is about 3 inches by 10 inches and is designed so that once something is dropped in, it can only be taken out by a designated police officer.

What do I do with medicine that has expired?

Expired medicines for people or animals are accepted in **The Box**. Just follow the directions from above.

Who can use The Box?

Any person who has personal use drugs or medication. Commercial facilities (i.e. hospital, nursing home, pharmacy) should follow their own disposal protocol and are not allowed to use **The Box**.

Questions? Contact Lauren at lklement@co.le-sueur.mn.us or by calling 507-357-8540.

To do list:

- Clean up low water areas
- Check my boat and trailer for exotic species every time I launch.
- Encourage county commissioners to move up the County 104 project.
- Encourage the County to take over the storm siren maintenance and insurance as a matter of Public Safety.
- Check my own property for opportunities to prevent nutrient run-off into the lake.
- Send news and articles for future newsletters to Buster.

I know someone who has a large amount of unneeded medication but is unable to bring it in for disposal. Can I drop off someone else's unneeded medication?

Yes. If needed, friends or family members may bring medication to **The Box** for someone else.

Can unused medicine be donated for others to use?

No. In Minnesota at this time there is no legal or safe way to donate unopened and/or unneeded medication.

Health Finders (507-330-4031) is a local organization that will accept some unneeded health-related equipment and supplies- but not medication. Call for information.

What happens to the medicine dropped into The Box?

The Box is emptied regularly. Contents are stored in a secured location. Periodically, law enforcement personnel will sort the medication. Medicines will then be taken to a licensed site to be incinerated at extremely high temperatures.

Who pays for the medication disposal?

Take It To the Box is a very cost effective program. Funding has come from: Le Sueur County Environmental Services. There is **no charge** to individuals when medications are dropped off at **Take It To The Box** locations.



Have you seen the tree horse? Or is it an alligator? It is between German and East Jefferson.

What is Take It To The Box?

The **Take It To The Box** program promotes the safe use, safe storage and, in particular, safe disposal of unneeded medication and illegal drugs.

The Le Sueur County community is serious about preventing medication misuse/abuse and about environmentally safe disposal of unneeded medication. Safe medication disposal helps reduce such risks.

Where is the Box?

The Box is located in the Le Sueur County Sheriff's Office Law Enforcement Center Lobby, 130 S Park Ave Le Center MN 56057

If you have further questions, please call 507-357-8538

Septic Inventory Results

The testing phase of the Septic Inventory is now complete. The final results have not been released yet, but the preliminary results were not encouraging. Fewer than half of those eligible for the free inspection signed up. Of the 338 properties that were tested, fewer than 60% of those were in compliance. When the final report is released, we will have the exact numbers, but at this point, we know there is a significant problem. The good news is that those who volunteered and were found to not be in compliance will have enough time to explore both individual and group options.

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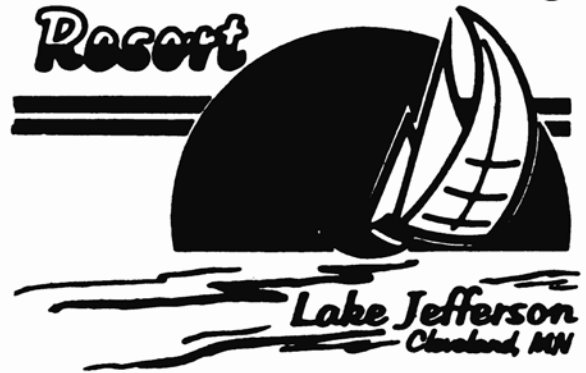
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Septic System Owner's Guide

The effectiveness of a septic system in treating sewage depends on how the homeowner uses and operates the system. Water-use habits, fixtures and appliances, product selection, and septic additives and cleaners all affect how well a septic system works. The septic system operates every time wastewater enters the system.

Water Use

The total amount of water and the pattern of water use affects how the septic system works. For complete and uniform treatment of wastes, the system needs time to work. The ideal situation would be to have wastewater enter the system as evenly as possible throughout the day and week. Every time water is used, waste-water enters the septic tank and an equal amount of water leaves the tank for the drainfield. Large volumes of water entering the system in a short period of time may agitate and re-suspend sludge and scum into the liquid contents. If this happens, suspended solids are carried into the soil treatment system, clogging soil pores and preventing adequate treatment.

Excessive water use puts an unnecessary load on the septic system. A typical Minnesotan uses about 110 gallons of water per day. About 60 percent of that water is used in the bathroom - toilet flushing is the largest user of water, followed by bathing, laundry, and dishwashing.

By controlling water use, selecting appropriate products, and making wise disposal decisions, the homeowner can improve performance of the septic system and avoid major problems!

Home Management Ideas to Improve Septic System Performance – Room by Room

BATHROOM

- Install a new low-flow toilet. New units give a complete flush with 1 1/2 gallons per flush. Caution: displacing water with bricks or water bottles in old toilet tanks often gives less than a total flush.
- Repair leaky faucets and toilets immediately.
- Flush toilets less often. In many cases, the toilet can be used several times for liquid waste before flushing.
- Do not use "every flush" toilet bowl disinfectants that are placed in the tank or bowl.
- Do not flush facial tissues, paper towels, or personal hygiene products down the toilet.
- Do not flush cigarette butts or unwanted prescription or over the counter medications down the toilet.
- Use moderate amounts of white toilet paper. Toilet paper should break up easily in water. Some dyes used for toilet paper are difficult for bacteria to break down.
- Take showers instead of tub baths. Showers use less water than tub baths (about 5 gallons per inch in tub).
- Take shorter showers.
- Install low-flow shower heads, hand held showers with pause control, and temperature balance valve controls.
- Shut off water in the shower while lathering and shampooing.
- Do not run the hot water in the shower to warm the bathroom.
- Reduce use of drain cleaners by minimizing the amount of hair that goes down the drain.
- Shut off water while shaving and brushing teeth (save up to 5 gallons per minute).
- Fill basin to wash hands instead of washing under running water.
- Reduce use of cleaners by doing more scrubbing with less cleanser.



KITCHEN

- Install low-flow faucets.
- Repair leaky faucets.
- Keep a pitcher of drinking water in the refrigerator instead of running the tap every time to get cool water.
- Hand wash dishes in the basin instead of under running water.
- Wash only full loads in the dishwasher.
- Install low-water-use dishwasher; use liquid detergent in the dishwasher.
- Use low-phosphate (0 to 5%) dishwasher soaps.
- Use the minimum amount of soap necessary to do the job. This is often less than suggested by manufacturers.
- Do not use a garbage disposal or dispose of vegetables, meat, fat, oil, coffee grounds and other undigested food products in the septic system. (Use composting or garbage service.)
- Reduce the use of drain cleaners by minimizing the amount of grease and food particles that go down the drain.
- Use minimal amounts of mild cleaners, as needed only.
- When using drinking water treatment devices, be sure there is a shutoff valve so the system doesn't run continuously when the reservoir is full. Some units may reject up to 8 gallons for every 1 gallon retained.



LAUNDRY

- Select a front-loading washing machine that uses 40% less water.
- Use suds-saving top-loading washing machine to reduce water and detergent use.
- Wash only full loads. Adjust load level settings for small loads.
- Distribute wash loads evenly throughout the week to avoid overloading the system with large volumes of water.
- Install filter on washer to remove lint.
- Use no-phosphate laundry detergents.
- Use the minimum amount of detergent or bleach necessary to do the job. This is often less than suggested by manufacturers.
- Use liquid detergents (powdered detergents add fine particles to the sludge accumulation).
- Use highly biodegradable powdered detergents if liquid detergents are undesirable.



BASEMENT AND UTILITY ROOMS



- Recharge the water softener as infrequently as possible to reduce water use.
- Reroute the water softener recharge water outside the septic system. It does not need to be treated.
- Route chlorine-treated water from swimming pools and hot tubs outside of septic system to a ditch or separate dry well.
- Route roof drains and basement drainage tile water (sump pumps) outside of septic system and away from the drainfield.
- Dispose of all solvents, paints, antifreeze, and chemicals through local recycling and hazardous waste channels. Consult local solid waste officials for proper methods. These materials kill valuable bacteria in the system and may pass through to contaminate drinking water.
- Never let wash water from latex paint on brushes or rollers go down the drain and into the septic system.

Tank Maintenance

The septic tank **MUST** be periodically cleaned (pumped) to remove floating scum and sludge that accumulate. If either floating scum or sludge is allowed to enter the soil treatment system (drainfield) it will cause expensive and often irreparable damage. How often to clean a septic tank depends on its size, use, and operating condition – typically every 18 – 30 months. A few dollars spent every one to three years on proper cleaning is much less expensive and easier to plan for than an unexpected \$2,000.00 to \$10,000.00 repair bill! Never go more than 36 months between cleanings!!

Proper Cleaning Method

Cleaning, or "pumping" as it's often called, must be done by a licensed and bonded professional. Proper cleaning will remove ALL scum, sludge, and liquid from the septic tank(s). This requires pumping, flushing, and backflushing liquid contents back and forth between the truck's tank and the septic tank through the manhole several times. This process breaks up all scum and sludge in the tank, allowing all solids to be removed by the truck's suction line. Floating scum left in the tank after cleaning may plug baffles or allow solids to enter the drainfield when the tank refills. Cleaning will leave a black film on the tank walls and a small amount of liquid on the tank floor. This contains millions of bacteria to help get the tank working following the cleaning.

When the tank is cleaned, ask the contractor to make sure the baffles are in place and functioning properly. Cleaning a tank through the inspection pipes will often leave solids in the tank and possibly damage baffles. Insist that the tank be cleaned through the manhole if the tank has one. Ask beforehand if the tank will be cleaned through the manhole, and if it will not, find a different contractor. It may cost slightly more to have the tank cleaned through the manhole, but this will save money in the long run. After cleaning, it is not necessary to add a starter. Bacteria present in wastewater and in the tank will do the job.

Septic Starters, Feeders, Cleaners and Other Additives

There is no quick fix or substitute for proper operation and regular maintenance. Do not use starters, feeders, cleaners and other additives. **Starters:** A starter is not needed to get the bacterial action going in the septic tank. There are naturally-occurring bacteria present in wastewater.

Feeders: It is not necessary to "feed" the system additional bacteria, yeast preparations, or other home remedies. There are millions of bacteria entering the system in normal sewage. If the bacterial activity level is low, figure out what is killing them (for example, cleaners) and correct it. High levels of activity will return after the correction.

Cleaners: Additives effective in removing solids from the septic tank will probably damage the soil treatment system. Many additives suspend the solids that would normally float to the top or settle to the bottom of the tank. This allows them to be flushed into the soil treatment system, where they clog pipes and soil pores leading to partial or complete failure of the system.

Other Additives: Additives, particularly degreasers, may contain carcinogens (cancer-causing agents) that flow directly into the groundwater along with the treated sewage.

Minn. Rules Chapter 7080, "Individual Sewage Treatment Standards," bans the use of septic system additives that contain hazardous materials. In addition, Chapter 7080 specifies that additives must not be used as a means of reducing the frequency of proper maintenance and removal of scum and sludge from the septic tank. EPA or USDA approval only means that the products contain no hazardous material. It does not mean the products are effective at what they claim to do.

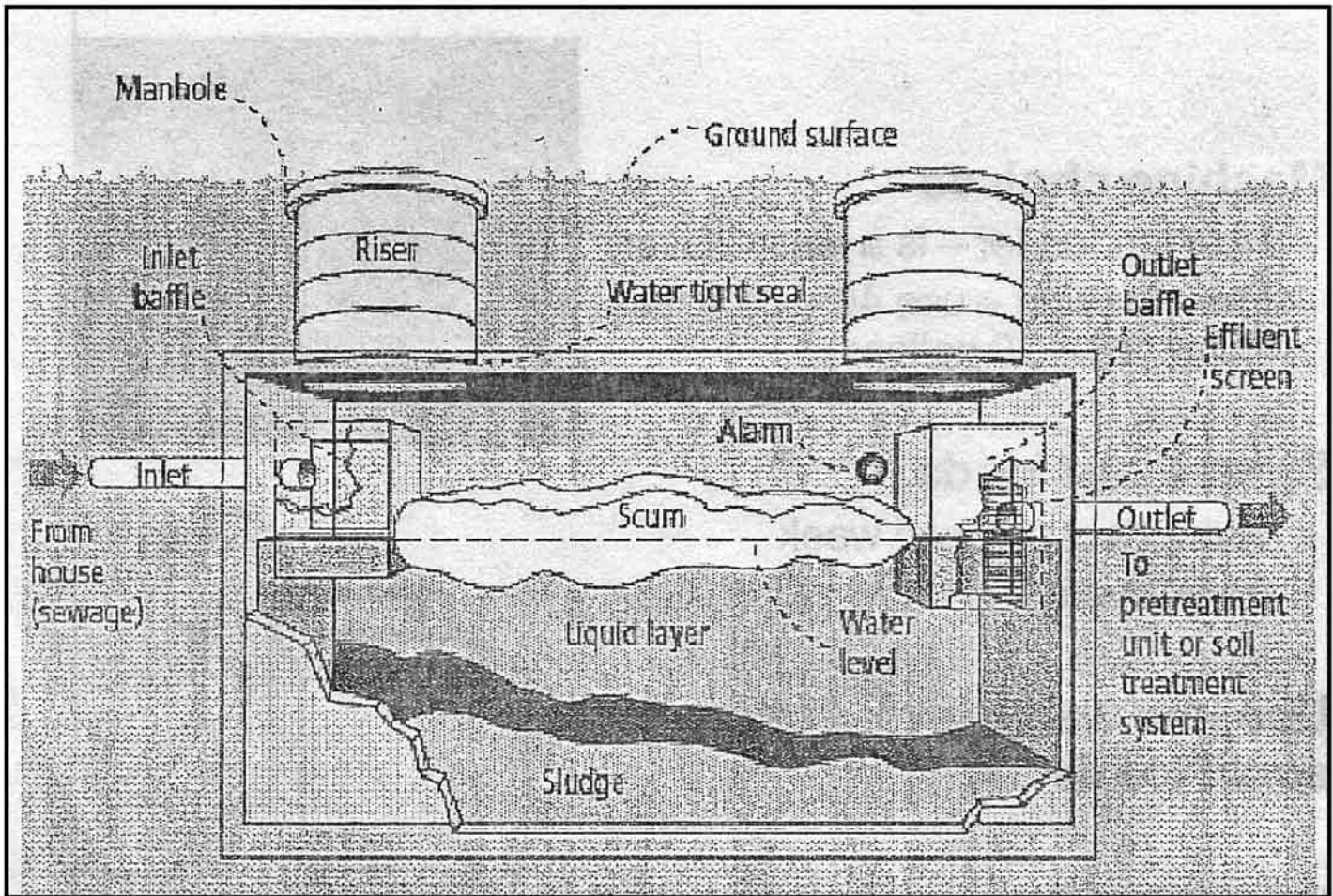
Soil Treatment System Maintenance

The soil treatment system can become clogged by **overloading** with water and solids. Large amounts of water flowing through the system can flush solids out of the septic tank before it has had a chance to separate the solids, scum, and water. For example, washing many loads of laundry on the same day may overload the tank. Space heavy water-using jobs throughout the week to prevent overloading. Lack of septic tank maintenance can cause biological overloading. Adding "dirty" water to the soil treatment system forces the biomat to become thicker than desired. This thickened layer slows the soil's ability to accept water, requiring more soil area than would normally be necessary.

Driving heavy vehicles on the drainfield or mound system before, during, or after construction can cause damage. Soil treatment depends on undisturbed, uncompacted, unsaturated soil to treat wastes. This is especially important in winter, when a vehicle's weight can drive the frost deep into the soil and prevent effective treatment from occurring. Nothing heavier than a riding lawnmower should be driven over any part of the septic system. People and vehicles should stay off the area in winter time to prevent deep freezing.

Good vegetative cover, usually grass, should be planted over soil treatment systems and mowed regularly. Mowing is necessary to encourage growth without using fertilizer. The vegetative cover helps the system remove nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorous by using them for plant growth. Do not plant trees or other plants with deep, invasive roots within 5 feet of the soil treatment system. Consider the mature size of trees and shrubs when planting young plants. Be sure to keep gophers and other rodents out of the soil treatment area.

*The information contained in this factsheet was taken from the University of Minnesota Extension Service "Septic System Owner's Guide." For more information, contact Le Sueur County Environmental Services at (507) 357-8538 or go to the University's website at <http://www.extension.umn.edu/topics.html?topic=2&subtopic=110>



For more information on septic systems contact the University of Minnesota Extension office:

<http://septic.umn.edu>

Click on information for Homeowners.

**If you're
burning
garbage,
you're
making
poison.**



*"We've been
doing it for
generations,
so what's the
big deal now?"*

Burning garbage in your backyard—whether done in a traditional burn barrel, wood stove, fire-pit, or at the cabin—is far more harmful to your, health, our health, and the environment than previously thought.

Backyard garbage burning can affect your health

Garbage has changed

Until a few decades ago, burning garbage in the backyard was much less dangerous to your health. Fifty years ago, most household garbage contained only untreated paper, wood, and glass. Today's garbage contains paper, plastics, and other types of packaging waste that release a hazardous mixture of carcinogens and other toxics (such as lead, mercury, and arsenic) when burned. Even seemingly harmless items, like paper, mail, packaging, and cardboard boxes used for frozen pizzas and vegetables, can give off toxic emissions.

Smoke

Pollution created by backyard garbage burning increases the health risk to those exposed directly to the smoke, which is an irritant that especially affects people with sensitive respiratory systems, as well as children and the elderly. Exposure to smoke can also increase the risk of heart disease, cause rashes, nausea, and headaches.

Dioxin

But the health concerns go well beyond those who are directly exposed—to those indirectly exposed to these toxic chemicals through their food. Among the health risks posed by backyard burning, dioxin—a known, potent human carcinogen and endocrine disrupter—is the main concern. Dioxin can have significant impacts on human immune, developmental, and reproductive systems. Dioxin exposure is especially harmful for children, pregnant women, and the elderly.

In Minnesota, dioxin is of particular concern since a recent survey shows that 45 percent of rural Minnesota residents still burn their garbage (*see our website*). Because burn barrels are more common in the rural, agricultural areas of the state, there is particular concern about high levels of dioxin settling on crops and in

our streams and lakes—and eventually winding up in the food we eat. Dioxin produced by backyard burning is deposited on plants, which in turn are eaten by animals. When people eat meat and dairy products, the dioxin is also absorbed. In fact, over 90 percent of all human dioxin uptake comes from meat and dairy consumption.

The EPA has been conducting exhaustive studies of dioxins for years. The good news is that as we've reduced the amount of dioxin in the environment, we've seen a corresponding reduction in the average level of dioxins in humans—from an average of 55 parts per trillion (ppt) in the 1980s to 25 ppt by the 1990s. The bad news, however, is that further studies show that health effects are detected at levels below 1 ppt.

An example of how dioxin in the smoke from burning garbage can end up in our food. When livestock eat feed that has been contaminated with dioxin, they concentrate the chemical in their milk and meat.

Dioxin and our food



**Minnesota Pollution
Control Agency**

w-hhw1-17

www.pca.state.mn.us/burnbarrel

The arguments for reducing backyard burning are clear

- Largest remaining source of dioxin, a potent carcinogen, as well as other health and environmental risks.



- Nearly 45% of rural Minnesotans and an estimated 20 million Americans still burn their garbage on-site.



- Proximity to animal feed and food crops creates a serious risk to our food supply.



- Backyard burning contributes to nearly half of all wildfires in Minnesota each year.



Reduction efforts in Minnesota

In Minnesota, open burning of household garbage is banned, with the exception of farms where regularly scheduled pick up of waste is not “reasonably available to the resident” (Minn. Stat. §§ 17.135 and 88.171). However, 28 of Minnesota’s 87 counties have passed no-burn/bury resolutions to close this exemption.

Statewide, the MPCA is working on the first phase of its Burn Barrel Reduction Campaign, a multi-year effort to reduce backyard garbage burning throughout Minnesota. Based on recommendations to the Legislature in the 2005 Solid Waste Policy Report, the MPCA will work to eliminate burn barrels by 2010.

Partnerships with state and local government. The MPCA has also worked with counties, local units of government, haulers, and rural residents on programs designed to reduce the use and prevalence of burn barrels and backyard burning through education, incentives, enforcement, and infrastructure development. Many counties like Houston, Otter Tail, Carver, Chisago, Crow Wing, St. Louis, and the Western Lake Superior Sanitary District have seen significant reductions in burn barrel use as a result of programs developed in partnership with neighboring counties, the MPCA, and DNR. Many other counties are also concerned about backyard garbage burning; 24 counties were being awarded burn barrel reduction grants in northeast, southwest, and east central Minnesota in 2007 with more projects expected to begin throughout 2007 and 2008.

Did you know?



The U.S. EPA estimates that one burn barrel (from an average family of four) can produce as much or more dioxin as a full-scale municipal waste incinerator burning 200 tons per day.

Burning garbage in burn barrels or fire pits creates low-temperature fires (less than 2,200° F), which receive very little oxygen and produce a lot of smoke. Under these conditions, a variety of toxic substances are produced and then released directly into the air without being treated or filtered.

Local governments leading the way

Chisago County reduced the number of residents who use burn barrels by 40 percent in four years after passing a no-burn resolution and conducting an education and incentive program called the Burn Barrel Buy-Back Campaign (4Bs). In a joint effort with local haulers, this program offered six months of garbage service at half price to residents who turned in their old burn barrels and signed up for garbage service. The haulers collected residents’ old burn barrels and ash and disposed of them at no charge. This had the added benefit of increasing the number of customers for local haulers; and after a short time, the haulers were actively promoting the program to residents. This project was funded by a grant with the MPCA, and MPCA staff worked hand-in-hand with the county to develop the program.

Other local governments are using various education and reduction programs along with parts of Chisago’s 4Bs program. Crow Wing and St. Louis have both conducted education campaigns through billboard displays, and St. Louis is in the process of measuring the impact on the number of people who no longer use burn barrels. With its successful Bernie the Burn Barrel TV ads, WLSSD has continued its education campaign, hosted a well-attended workshop for elected officials on burn barrels, and worked with the MPCA to update *Clearing the Air: Tools for Reducing Residential Garbage Burning*, a resource for Minnesota local governments.



For more about the dangers of burning or how to get involved in the campaign

www.pca.state.mn.us/burnbarrel

651-296-6300 | 800-657-3864



Minnesota Pollution Control Agency

West Jefferson rain gauge:

July	1.52 inches
August	1.33
September	0.60
October	1.22

West Jefferson lake gauge:

March 5	1017.44
May 12	1017.84
November 1	1015.71

For comparison in 1990 the gauge was just below 1013.00. In 1993 the gauge was just short of 1020.00.

ST. PETER HERALD
Thursday, September 13, 2012

County pursues grant for Geldner Saw Mill repairs

By PAUL M. MALCHOW
pmalchow@lesueurnews-herald.com

LE CENTER – With a little luck, the historic Geldner sawmill may once again chug its way into the hearts of history lovers. At its Sept. 4 meeting, the Le Sueur County Board of Commissioners gave the go-ahead to pursue a grant through the Minnesota Historical Society for the restoration of the 1870 structure and boiler.

County Parks Director Don Reak said since the sawmill is on the National Register of Historic Places and is owned by the county, it is eligible for a slice of a \$450,000 pie allocated by the Minnesota legislature. Reak said he would like to seek a \$40,000 grant for the project.

The only stationary steam-powered saw in the state, the Geldner sawmill was purchased by the county in 1978. For over three decades, on the second Sunday of the month from May through August, the 130-year-old saw is put through its paces for public viewing. Reak said the



operate the saw.

A recent site visit from the Minnesota Historical Society revealed the building itself is tilting and the roof is in need of repair.

"The engine which runs the saw mill is great," Reak told the board. "It was just done in 1979."

Although \$40,000 is not nearly enough to put the sawmill back in operation, Reak felt it was prudent to only ask for that amount. The county would be required to match the grant dollar for dollar which may be a touchy subject as it considers a double-digit tax levy increase for 2013. Reak said the Geldner Mill Family Fund has committed to some financial support and corporate and private donors have also expressed interest in the project.

The grant application will be submitted to the state by Sept. 21. If approved, the county will have one year to complete the project.

Reach reporter Paul M. Malchow at 931-8576, or follow him on Twitter.com @LNHPaul-Malchow

The Geldner sawmill near Cleveland had been a popular attraction for history buffs before it was forced to close by the state in 2011. (Herald File Photo)

event draws about 20 to 30 visitors each time.

The engine at the mill features one 12-inch piston which moves back and forth horizontally in an 18-inch stroke. Steam from the boiler provides alternating pressure on both sides of the piston, moving it back and forth. The higher the pressure, the faster the piston moves. The faster the piston moves, the faster the saw blade spins.

It was the need for this high-pressure steam which ceased activity of the sawmill. In 2011 inspectors determined the steel of the boiler's shell, which was new in 1939, had eroded to a point where it was no longer safe to operate with enough pressure to

2012 Dues

Please join the 300 plus property owners who have committed to improving the lakes by joining the Lake Association.

Name _____

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___ Annual Dues	\$20
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___ Corporate	\$1,000
___ Extra for Siren Fund	<u>\$20</u>
Total	\$_____

Please send this page and your check to:

Larry Wasmund (treasurer)
28275 464th St.
Cleveland MN 56017

Make checks payable to:

Greater Jefferson German Lakes Association

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GJGLA

You may also register online at:
<http://jgla.org>

You may use your credit card to pay online.

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Website: <http://jgla.org>

email: lakeassociation@hickorytech.net

Mission Statement

The mission and purpose of the Association is to:

- Promote and coordinate water management, water quality, and water control in the Jefferson German lakes water basin.
- Further communication between members of the Association and other parties interested in the Jefferson German lakes water basin.
- And do all other things of common interest and benefit with regard to water management, water quality, and water control regarding the Jefferson German lakes water basin.