

### **Why is Trinidad concerned about septic systems?**

Public Health and Safety: Untreated wastewater poses significant health risks. Domestic wastewater contains bacteria, viruses and nutrients that cause dysentery, hepatitis, typhoid fever and "blue baby" syndrome.

Water Quality and Environmental Health: Nutrients in wastewater pollute aquatic ecosystems and upset the natural balance of the environment. Trinidad is surrounded by sensitive natural resources that must be protected.

Community Welfare: Polluted water can affect recreational opportunities and tourism around Trinidad. Property values could decline and hurt the economic base of the community.

### **Why should you be concerned about septic systems?**

Money: Maintenance is much cheaper than repair or replacement of a failed system. Compare the cost of a typical inspection and pumping (\$650 every 3 years) to a replacement that can cost upwards of \$10,000

Money: Failed septic system decline individual property values and can result in development restrictions or block real estate transactions. Environmental degradation can result in lowered property values around the community.

Your Health: Failed or improperly functioning systems may discharge untreated waste into your yard, your neighbors yard or nearby waters.

### **Contact Numbers**

#### **Trinidad City Clerk**

677-0223 phone

677-3759 fax

trinidadcityclerk@cox.net - email

#### **County Environmental Health Division**

445-6215

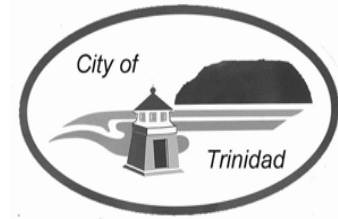
#### **Streamline Planning Consultants**

Contact: Bob Brown (City Planner)\*  
or Trevor Parker (Assistant City Planner)\*  
822-5785

### **For Further Information**

Go to the City's web page to read public education materials and to find out when and where meetings and workshops will be held.

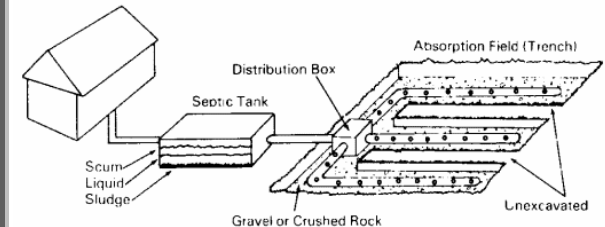
**trinidad.ca.gov**



### ***Onsite Wastewater***

### ***Treatment System***

### ***Management Program***



This pamphlet is designed to inform residents about septic system issues, and the development of Trinidad's Onsite Wastewater Treatment System Management Program.

### **Prepared by:**

Streamline Planning Consultants

June 2005

## Septic Systems in Trinidad

A septic system is an onsite wastewater treatment system (OWTS) that uses the soil to treat wastewater. A septic system has two main parts; a holding tank (septic tank) and an absorption field (leachfield). There are a variety of different types of OWTS with different accessories. In all septic systems, wastewater from toilets, sinks, showers, washing machines, home enters the septic tank. Heavier solids settle out and scum rises to the surface (see figure on front of pamphlet). The water between the scum and solid layer ultimately enters the leachfield and trickles down into the soil where biological filtration occurs.

The City of Trinidad and the surrounding areas use OWTS as the only means of wastewater disposal. The City of Trinidad has been concerned about the Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems (OWTS), or septic systems, within the City for the last 30 years. Trinidad was subdivided by the 1950's into 8000 s.f. residential lots. As a result the OWTS are at a high density. There are a significant number of systems that are old and unpermitted and that do not meet current standards (e.g. pit systems). This puts the Trinidad area at risk for water quality and public health impacts.

In the past, OWTS were considered a temporary means of sewage disposal, with a sewage treatment plant the ultimate solution. As technology has improved, septic systems are now viewed as a permanent method of wastewater disposal as long as they are properly maintained. At this point, construction of a sewage treatment plant in the Trinidad area is unfeasible and undesirable. Therefore, the City must ensure that OWTS are adequately maintained to ensure proper wastewater treatment.

## Trinidad OWTS Management Program

The Trinidad OWTS Management Program came about as a result of community concerns and based on public input. The City's program is modeled after other community program and is appropriate for areas with high development densities and nearby sensitive resources. These include the coastal stream and the Trinidad Kelp Beds, which have been designated as a State Area of Special Biological Significance. Trinidad's program is also being developed to be consistent with the new statewide septic regulations that will be forthcoming in the next year.

There are four main elements of Trinidad's OWTS Management Program: 1) regulatory framework; 2) water quality monitoring; 3) database management / GIS; and 4) public outreach.

Regulatory Framework: A new ordinance will establish the requirement for operating permits for all OWTS within the City. Periodic inspections and proper maintenance will be required prior to issuance or renewal of operating permits.

Water Quality Monitoring: A water quality monitoring program for both surface and groundwater in and around the City is being implemented to ensure that septic systems are not degrading the environment.

Database Management / GIS: The City is using a GIS (geographic information system) to inventory and track septic systems and operating permits in the City.

Public Outreach: Landowner education is one of the most effective means of preventing septic system failures. This program has been, and will continue to be developed based on community input.

## Taking Care of Your Septic System

- Do** have your tank inspected and pumped every three years
- Do** practice water conservation. Repair drips and leaks. Use water-saving showers, toilets and faucets. Spread out loads of laundry.
- Do** use your property and septic system consistent with how it was designed. Septic systems are designed based on the number of living units and bedrooms in each unit. This assumes a certain number of people and water usage. The more strain you put on your system, the more likely it is to cause you and our community problems.
- Do** install risers and effluent filters.
- Do** know where your system is located and how it works, and doesn't work.
- Don't** drive or park or build over any part of your system.
- Don't** plant shrubs or trees over your system. Roots may clog and damage your lines or leach field.
- Don't** use your toilet as a trash can or for food disposal
- Don't** dispose of cooking oil, fats and grease in your septic system.
- Don't** use garbage disposals. The large particles put a significant additional strain on your system.
- Don't** use commercial septic system additives. At best they are harmless and a waste of money; at worst they hurt your system. They are not an alternative to regular maintenance, which is cheaper in the long run.
- Don't** make or allow any repairs to your system without the proper permits from the Health Department.
- Don't** pour hazardous household chemicals or medicine down the drain.