

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, the ecosystem, 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 failed systems. The cost of a typical inspection & pumping: \$850 every 3 years. Replacement: upwards of \$20,000. Typical septic maintenance is also half the cost of local sewer fees.

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.

Health: Faulty septic systems may discharge untreated waste into your yard, your neighbor's yard or nearby waters where you, children & others are vulnerable to pollution.

Contact Numbers

Trinidad City Clerk
707-677-0223 phone
707-677-3759 fax
cityclerk@trinidad.ca.gov - email

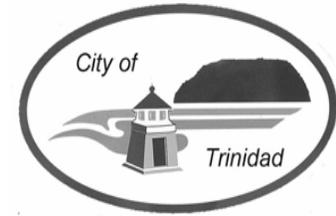
Streamline Planning Consultants
Contact: Trever Parker (City Planner, OWTS Administrator)
707-822-5785

County Environmental Health Division
707-445-6215

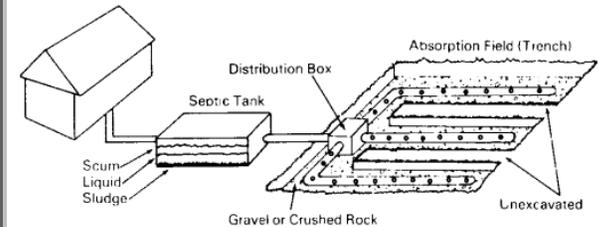
For Further Information

Public education materials and updates may be found under the 'documents library' section of the City's website:

trinidad.ca.gov



Onsite Wastewater Treatment System Management Program



This pamphlet is designed for Trinidad residents regarding Trinidad's Onsite Wastewater Treatment System (OWTS) Management Program and septic care.

Prepared by:



Septic Systems in Trinidad

A septic system is an onsite wastewater treatment system (OWTS) that uses the soil to treat wastewater. A standard septic system has two main parts: a holding tank (septic tank) and an absorption field (leachfield). In all septic systems, wastewater from toilets, sinks, showers, washing machines, etc. 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. Due to Trinidad's small size and distance from neighboring communities, development of a centralized wastewater treatment facility is infeasible due to excessive costs. OWTS in Trinidad are highly dense with a significant number of old and unpermitted systems that do not meet current standards. This puts the Trinidad area at risk of water quality and public health impacts.

Current water quality testing is indicating that there is septic pollution in our local creeks and groundwater. Further, Trinidad State Beach is listed as "impaired" for bacteria pursuant to the Clean Water Act, as a result of the periodic beach closures.

Trinidad OWTS Management Program

The Trinidad OWTS Management Program resulted from community concerns and public input; it is appropriate for high development densities and nearby sensitive resources such as Trinidad's coastal streams and the Trinidad Kelp Beds (designated as a State Area of Special Biological Significance (ASBS)). It is also consistent with the new statewide septic regulations.

Management Program Operating Permits (How will this process work?)

1. Everyone will have to get their system inspected by a qualified service provider (e.g. Steve's Septic, Humboldt County Environmental Health staff, etc).
2. An Inspection Report (in a form approved by the City) shall be submitted to the City. The report will include a performance rating as to how your system is functioning (e.g. Excellent, Satisfactory, Poor, Fail).
3. Fill out an OWTS User / Owner Questionnaire and submit to the City as an application for an Operating Permit. This form will ask things about the type and amount of use of the OWTS, such as how many people living there, whether you use a garbage disposal, etc..
4. City staff will determine the maintenance schedule and terms of your operating permit and will issue it within 30 days. The schedules will be developed based on the Inspection Report and OWTS Owner / User Questionnaire. The City then tracks maintenance.
5. A standard operating permit for an average system will be 3 years, but may range from 1-5 years depending on system conditions.

Will I Have to Upgrade My System?

Except for risers and filters, most systems that are functioning normally-even if not up to code-will generally remain "as is" until something triggers a required upgrade. Upgrades may be triggered by property sales or development permits. Higher risk systems will be inspected and maintained on a more frequent basis in order to prevent failure or other problems rather than requiring immediate upgrades.

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.
- Do** inform renters about the proper care and function of a septic system.
- 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** pour hazardous household chemicals or medicine down the drain.
- 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.