



State of New Jersey

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**MEMORANDUM**

To: Interested Parties

From: Ed Wengrowski  
Wastewater Management Coordinator

Subject: Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems Management in the New Jersey Pinelands

Date: August 22, 2008

The Pinelands Commission has been at the forefront of onsite wastewater system management since the adoption of the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP) in 1981. Since its inception, the Commission has implemented a number of effective wastewater management strategies to preserve, protect and enhance the water resources of the region. These strategies include strict standards that govern the siting, design and performance of onsite wastewater treatment systems (OWTS). Perhaps most notable are the CMP standards that specify nitrogen dilution requirements, seasonal high water table requirements and septic system maintenance requirements. The Commission has also made significant advances in determining the effectiveness of advanced onsite wastewater treatment technologies.

The Commission has long recognized that onsite wastewater treatment systems make up an important and permanent part of the region's wastewater infrastructure. Routine maintenance of all onsite systems is essential, from the most basic traditional septic tank and leach field systems to state-of-the-art denitrifying technologies. Institutionalized management provides a mechanism to ensure that systems are functioning in a manner that is protective of public health and the environment and further protects the investment that homeowners have made in their onsite wastewater systems.

The USEPA and NJDEP also recognize the importance of system maintenance. In its 1997 "Response to Congress on the Use of Decentralized Wastewater Treatment Systems", US EPA acknowledges that, when properly managed, onsite and decentralized wastewater treatment systems provide adequate protection of public health and environmental quality. NJ DEP in its July 2008 Water Quality Management Planning Rule (N.J.A.C. 7: 15) adoption now requires all municipalities to demonstrate that septic systems are subject to a mandatory maintenance program.

The enclosed Onsite Wastewater Systems Management Manual for the New Jersey Pinelands is intended to aid municipalities in meeting NJDEP's and the Pineland Commission's mandatory septic system management requirements by facilitating the institutional management of onsite wastewater systems at the county or municipal level.

The Management Manual utilizes USEPA's concept in which Responsible Management Entities (RME's) administer the management program. The manual identifies four specific management models in which County Health Departments, Utility Authorities, Non-Profit Organizations or Environmental/Engineering



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Consultants act in the capacity of the RME's. Municipalities will need to implement a management program after deciding which model best meets local needs and conditions.

Each of these models provide a means to educate homeowners about the need to perform preventive maintenance (e.g., pump outs) of their OWTS, ensure that advanced treatment technologies receive enhanced maintenance and confirm that systems are functioning to protect public health and the environment. The Pinelands Commission is committed to assist each Pinelands Area municipality develop and implement a wastewater management program that is suitable to local institutional conditions and protects Pinelands water resources.