



**Lake George  
Park Commission**

# Wastewater Regulations & Septic Inspections One Season In...



# Septic Systems: Let's get into it!



- ▶ **General Background**
- ▶ **Planning Process**
- ▶ **Standards for Inspections**
- ▶ **Inspection Results**
- ▶ **Next Steps**

# Septic Systems and Public Health

UNOFFICIAL COMPILIATION OF CODES, RULES AND REGULATIONS OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK TITLE 10. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH. CHAPTER II. PART 75. STANDARDS FOR INDIVIDUAL ONSITE WATER SUPPLY AND INDIVIDUAL ONSITE WASTEWATER TREATMENT SYSTEMS. APPENDIX 75-A.

## APPENDIX 75-A

WASTEWATER TREATMENT STANDARDS - RESIDENTIAL ONSITE SYSTEMS  
(Statutory Authority: Public Health Law, 201(1)(i))

### SECTION

75-A.1 Introduction

75-A.2 Regulation by other

75-A.3 Sewage flows

75-A.4 Soil and site appraisal

75-A.5 House or building

75-A.6 Septic tanks and En

75-A.7 Distribution devices

75-A.8 Conventional subsu

75-A.9 Alternative subsurfa

75-A.10 Other systems

75-A.11 Specific Waivers



- ▶ Concept of septic systems originated in France ca. 1860
- ▶ Common in suburban and rural areas throughout US
  - ▶ 25% US Households
- ▶ 1970's regulations standardized design and install
  - ▶ Tank Size
  - ▶ Leach Field Size
  - ▶ Site Characteristics
- ▶ Protective of public health
  - ▶ Pathogens including bacteria and viruses



# LGPC Regulatory Authority (ECL 43)

*‘In consultation with DEC, DOH and each municipality within the park, the commission shall... **adopt rules and regulations for the discharge of wastewater to ensure optimum protection of ground and surface waters within the Park.**’ (43-0112)*

*And to...*

*“Study, monitor and inspect for pollution from any source within the park and to enforce the provisions of this article and any regulations promulgated pursuant thereto” (43-0107)*

# Partners and Expertise

## - Ad-Hoc Committee

- 5 LGPC Board Members

## - Panel of Regional Experts:

- DEC, DOH, Planners, CEOs, PE's, Elected Officials, Business Leaders

## - Monthly Meetings: July 2021-Feb 2022

- Public meetings with Regional Experts

### 1. LGPC Committee members:

1. Ken Parker, Chair
2. Bill Mason
3. Cathy LaBombard
4. Dave Floyd
5. Joe Stanek

### 2. Advisory members to the Committee:

1. Tom Snow, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, Director of NYC Watershed Program
2. Kevin Kenyon, Professional Engineer, NYS Department of Health Glens Falls Office
3. Tom Jarrett, Professional Engineer, Jarrett Engineering
4. Kathy Flacke Muncil, Proprietor of Fort William Henry Resort, business leader
5. Susan Wilson, Deputy Supervisor, Town of Bolton
6. Walt Lender, Executive Director, Lake George Association
7. Chris Navitsky, Professional Engineer, Lake George Waterkeeper
8. Dan Barusch, Director of Planning and Zoning, Town of Lake George
9. Claudia Braymer, Warren County Supervisor from Glens Falls Ward 3
10. Ethan Gaddy, Planner, Warren County Planning
11. Samuel Hall, Chairman, Washington County Board of Supervisors
12. John Graham, Code Enforcement Administrator, Washington County
13. Tom Cunningham, Ticonderoga Town Board
14. Hannah Neilly, Project Coordinator, Essex County Office of Community Resources

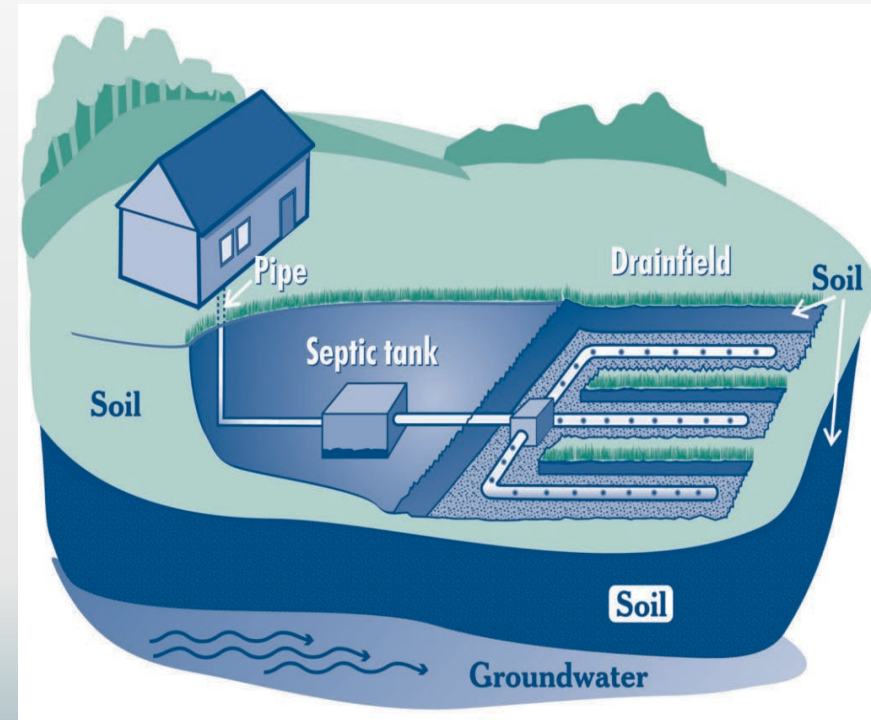




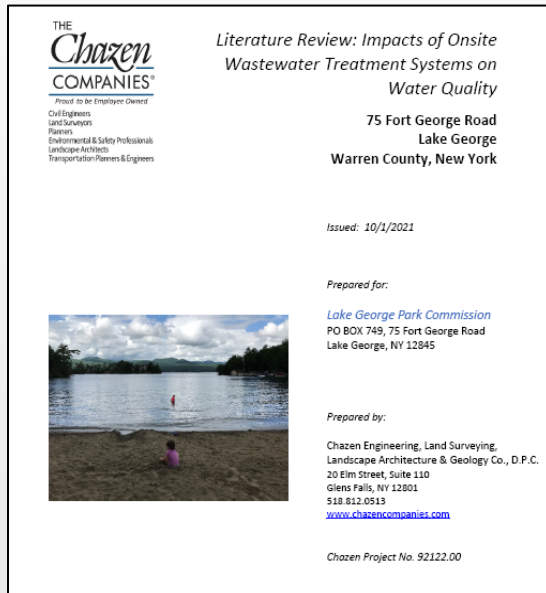
# Learning about the Issue

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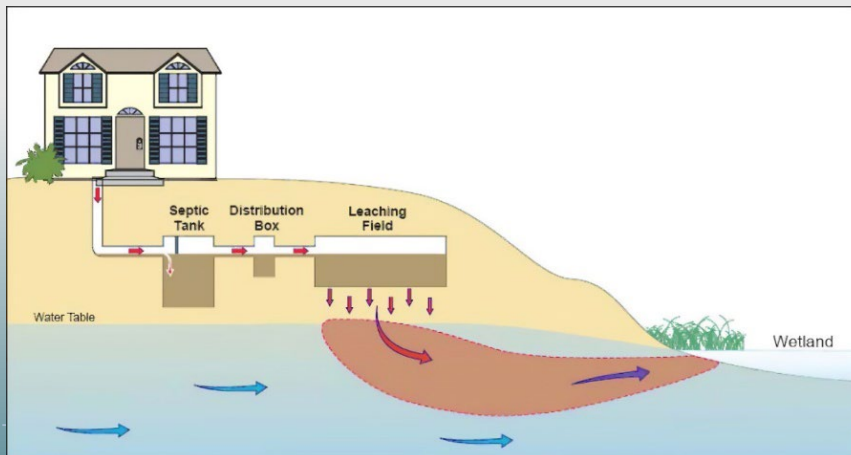
- ▶ Ad-Hoc Committee, 18 months
  - ▶ July 2021 First Ad-Hoc Meeting
- ▶ Literature Review
  - ▶ What do we know about septic system impacts to lakes
- ▶ Data Analyses
  - ▶ Status of septic systems around Lake George
- ▶ Management Options
  - ▶ Research other lake communities that have implemented septic system inspection programs, and why



# Literature: Septic Systems and Water Quality



- ▶ Improper design, construction, or maintenance can impact water quality:
  - ▶ Bacteria, nutrients, etc.
  - ▶ EPA estimates 10-20% fail/malfunction
- ▶ Contributing Factors:
  - ▶ Density of systems, system age, soil type, depth to bedrock and water table
    - ▶ EPA: Potential for regional groundwater contamination when >1 system / 16 acres
- ▶ More Dirt Means More Treatment
  - ▶ Phosphorus retention largely occurs in unsaturated soils beneath the drain field
  - ▶ Increased depth, is increased retention
  - ▶ Examples in Practice
    - ▶ APA: 4' to SHGW for conventional systems
    - ▶ Queensbury: 3' separation in waterfront zone

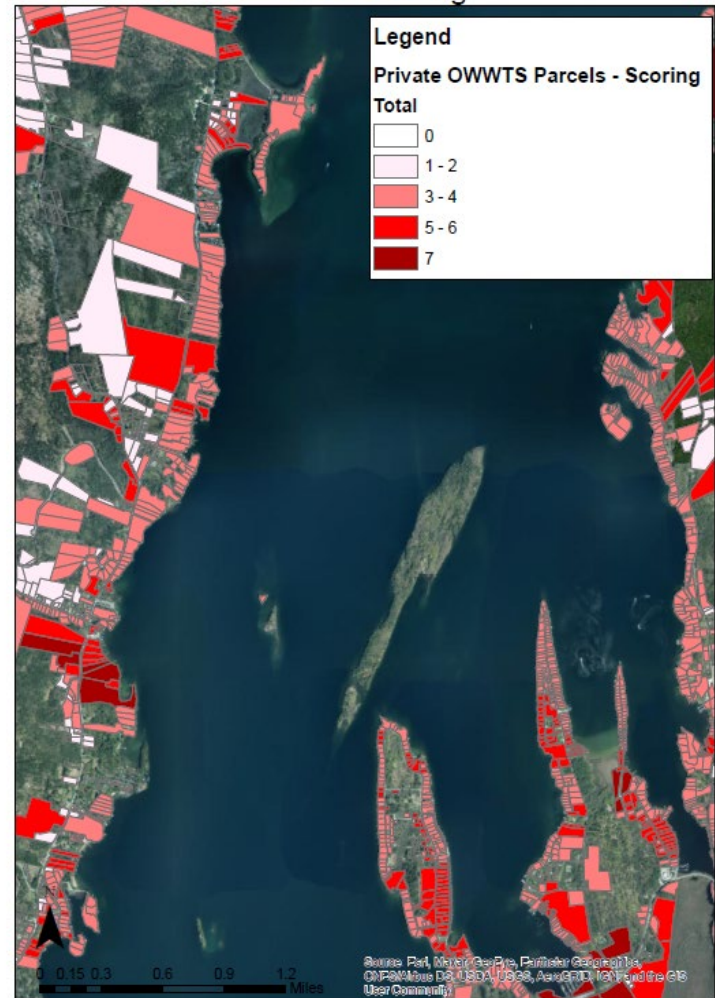


# Analysis:

## Septic Systems in the Lake George Park

- ▶ 5,950 (69%) of occupied parcels in the LG Park use septic systems
- ▶ 2,450 (41%) of septic systems are within 500' of the Lake or 100' of streams
- ▶ 84% of septic systems are located in areas that have physical 'limiting factors'
- ▶ Median parcel size with septic is 0.8 ac
- ▶ System density 3X higher near shore
- ▶ Average age of a home is 50 years old

Lake George Park Private OWWTS  
Parcel Scoring





# Management Options: Other Septic Programs

## ▶ Routine Pump-out and Septic Inspection

- ▶ Locate System
- ▶ Review for Discharges
- ▶ Inspect Integrity of the Parts: Tank, Piping, etc.
- ▶ Leachfield Function

## ▶ 13 Septic Inspection Systems Programs Researched

▶ Several other lakes in NYS have been inspecting septic systems for upwards of 20 years

## ▶ Local Examples: Queensbury and Bolton

▶ Programs vary in costs and logistics, but the intent and outcomes are the same: protecting public health and water quality through routine septic inspection



Program	Program Manager/Contact Information	Program Description	How Funded?	Why Created?	Inspection Fee?
Keuka, NY	Colby Petersen, Manager (315) 536-5188 colby@keukawater.com	The law provides local authority for both new and replacement construction of septic systems, as well as the Zone 1 (200 feet of lake or waterbody) and Real Property Transfer Inspection Program.	Fees and Dedicated Funds from Each Town	Tourism and tax base. The municipalities also recognized that there was no uniformity in regulations and enforcement.	\$50
Canandaigua, NY	Tyler O'He, Title: Canandaigua Lake Watershed Inspector (315) 398-9714 Tyler.O'He@ontsvd.com	Canandaigua Lake Watershed Inspection Program - Administered through Ontario SWCD. Built on a model law that has been passed by all towns. Paid by water purveyors beginning in 1950s. Inspector reviews and approves systems. Assists with soil and erosion inspection. Ensures no failure based on DOH definition within 200 ft of lake, inspection every 5 years.	Fees and Water Purveyors	2014 Canandaigua Lake Watershed Management Plan recognized untreated wastewater as a source of nutrient. Regulatory boards created in response to outbreaks of waterborne diseases.	\$175
Cayuga, NY	Cayuga SWCD (315) 252-4171 x4 cayugaswcd@cayugaswcd.org	Cayuga County Code - Inspection at Property Transfer and Regular intervals based on Distance from Lake and Town	Fees	To eliminate potential health hazards and protect surface and ground water by ensuring that septic systems located within Cayuga County operate satisfactorily.	\$150
Otsego, NY	Amy Wyant, OCCA Executive Director: (607)-547-4400 director@occainfo.org	Village of Cooperstown Law Beginning in 2005 - Require 5 Year inspections in proximity to aquatic resources.	Initial Funding by OCCA and the Clark Foundation  Fees	SUNY Oneonta began monitoring nutrient levels near septic systems in the lake and noticed it could be substantial in 2004.	\$50
Honeyoye (Ontario County), NY	Tad Grace (585) 396-1450 tad.grace@ontsvd.com	All Ontario outside of Canandaigua Watershed. Non regulatory - towns adopt if they choose. Most inspections done for deed transfer, sometimes from change of use or capacity. SWCD or OTH Inspector on-site. Some towns have continued regulations as needed (e.g. Rental Properties inspected every 3 Years in Geneva). SWCD inspection provides the homeowner with an unbiased, neutral assessment of their septic system	Fees, Other SWCD OH	To protect the water quality of Honeyoye Lake and surrounding ecological resources.	\$175



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Q Search

Lake George Park Commission

Programs

Permits

Boats and Docks

Meetings

Regulations

About

# Septic System Program Resources

The documents below are being used to help inform the discussions and decisions of the Septic System Review Committee.

	<a href="#">LGPC Septic Inspection Programs Review 9.2.21</a>	 DOWNLOAD
	<a href="#">Private OWWTS Inspection Research Update 9.2.21 - Presentation</a>	 DOWNLOAD
	<a href="#">Septic Literature Review Matrix - 7.30.21</a>	 DOWNLOAD
	<a href="#">Town of Lake George Septic Initiative Program</a>	 DOWNLOAD
	<a href="#">Report: Contaminants of Emerging Concern &amp; Public Perception of the Issues - 2018</a>	 DOWNLOAD





# Septic Inspections LGPC Regulations NYCRR 646-3

- ▶ April 2023, New Regulations Established for the Lake George watershed
- ▶ Routine 5-yr Septic Inspections: 1/5<sup>th</sup> of the 2,450 properties will be inspected each year for five years
- ▶ Each year, letter to those ~500 landowners to arrange septic pumpout and inform the Commission
- ▶ Landowner coordinates with a hauler & has all tanks and distribution box uncovered
- ▶ LGPC Inspector is on-site for pumpout to conduct inspection





# Funding Inspections

LGPC Regulations NYCRR 646-3

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Residential System

Annual Fee \$50

Commercial System

Annual Fee \$100

Holding Tanks for Res/Com

Annual Fee \$25 / \$50

Septic Tank Pumpout Fee to Hauler

Variable \$200-400 every five years





# What are we looking for?

## Function, Size, & Location

### ▶ **Failing** Wastewater Treatment System:

- ▶ 1) Discharge wastewater to surface waters or the ground surface
- ▶ 2) Lack of a soil absorption system
- ▶ 3) Metal tanks
- ▶ 4) Cesspools
- ▶ 5) A backup of sewage into the dwelling, septic tank, or distribution box
- ▶ 6) Septic Tank < 50 % required size

### ▶ **Substandard** Wastewater Treatment System:

- ▶ 1) Septic tank that has less than 100% of the required capacity
- ▶ 2) Absorption area that has less than 75% of the required capacity
- ▶ 3) Absorption area < 50 feet to Lake George or a regulated stream
  
- ▶ Substandard “Other” = Repairs: d-boxes, baffles, pump alarms

- ▶ Exempt from “Substandard” are systems that received a construction permit from the appropriate Review Authority



# Inspection Outcomes & Timeframes

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1. Pass:
    1. See you in five years
  2. Repairs Needed:
    1. Fix quick and either re-inspect or landowner sends documentation
  3. Failed Systems:
    1. Corrected within 6 months
  4. Substandard Systems:
    1. Upgrade within 5 years (e.g. tank size)
- ▶ All upgrades/replacements permitted by current review authority (e.g. Town)
- 





# 2023 Program Activity



2023 Inspections/Month



## Staffing:

- 2 full-time, seasonal inspectors
- Existing staff (5) cross-trained



## Field Work:

- 330 inspections
- Busiest in Autumn



## Administrative Processing:

- ETUs: ~60
- Local Permit/Inspection: ~75
- Scheduling, DataMngmt, QA/QC

# 2023 Inspection Results

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Passed: 46%



Everyone is Happy:

- Septic Size, Location, & Function are all good





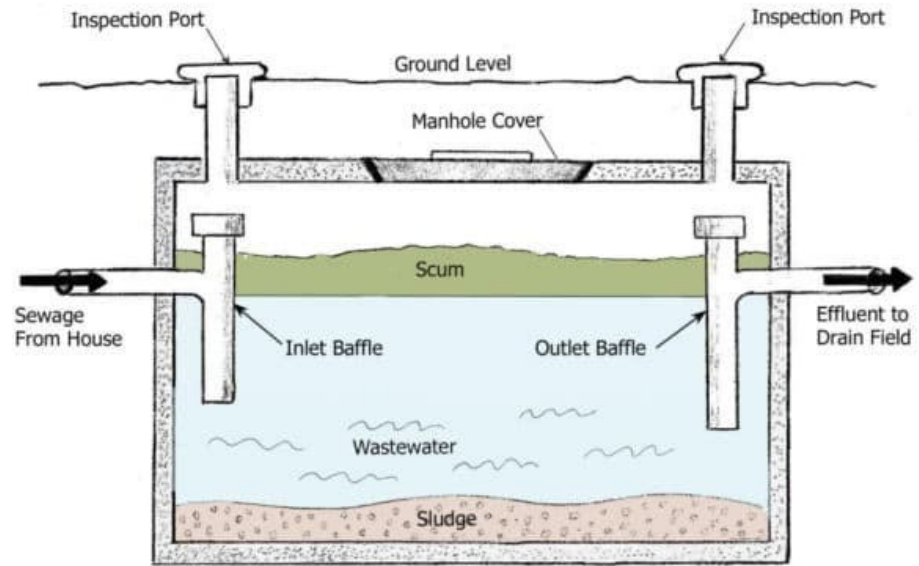
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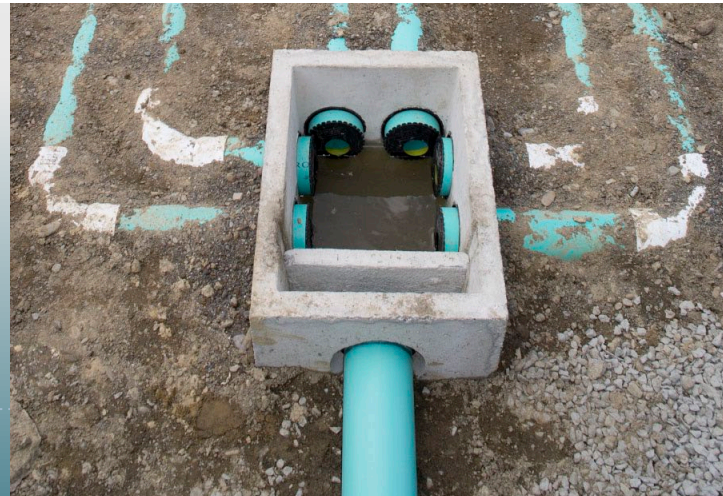
Need Repair: 16%

Repair Examples:

- Inlet or Outlet Baffles
- Distribution Box out of level



Septic Tank Cross-Section



# 2023 Inspection Results

Passed: 46%  
Need Repair: 16%  
Substandard: 15%

## Substandard Examples:

- Undersized Absorption Area
  - Commonly seepage pits
- Undersized Septic Tanks



TABLE 3  
MINIMUM SEPTIC TANK CAPACITIES

Number of Bedrooms	Minimum Tank Capacity (gallons)	Minimum Liquid Surface Area (sq. ft.)
1, 2, 3	1,000	27
4	1,250	34
5	1,500	40
6	1,750	47

NOTE: Tank size requirements for more than six bedrooms shall be calculated by adding 250 gallons and seven square feet of surface area for each additional bedroom. A garbage grinder shall be considered equivalent to an additional bedroom for determining tank size.



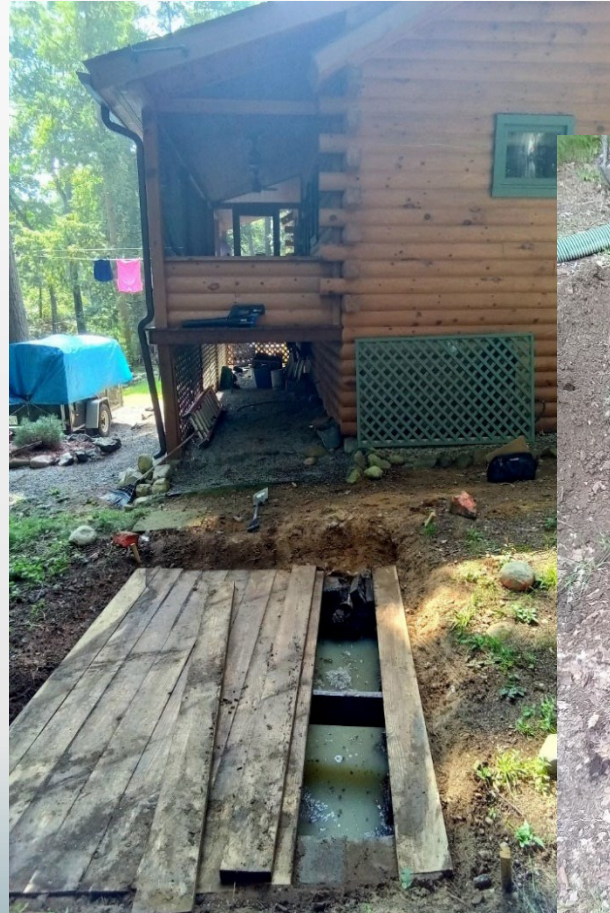
# 2023 Inspection Results

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Passed: 46%  
Need Repair: 16%  
Substandard: 15%  
Failed: 23%

## Failed System Examples:

- Cesspools
- Old Metal Tanks
- Sewage Backup



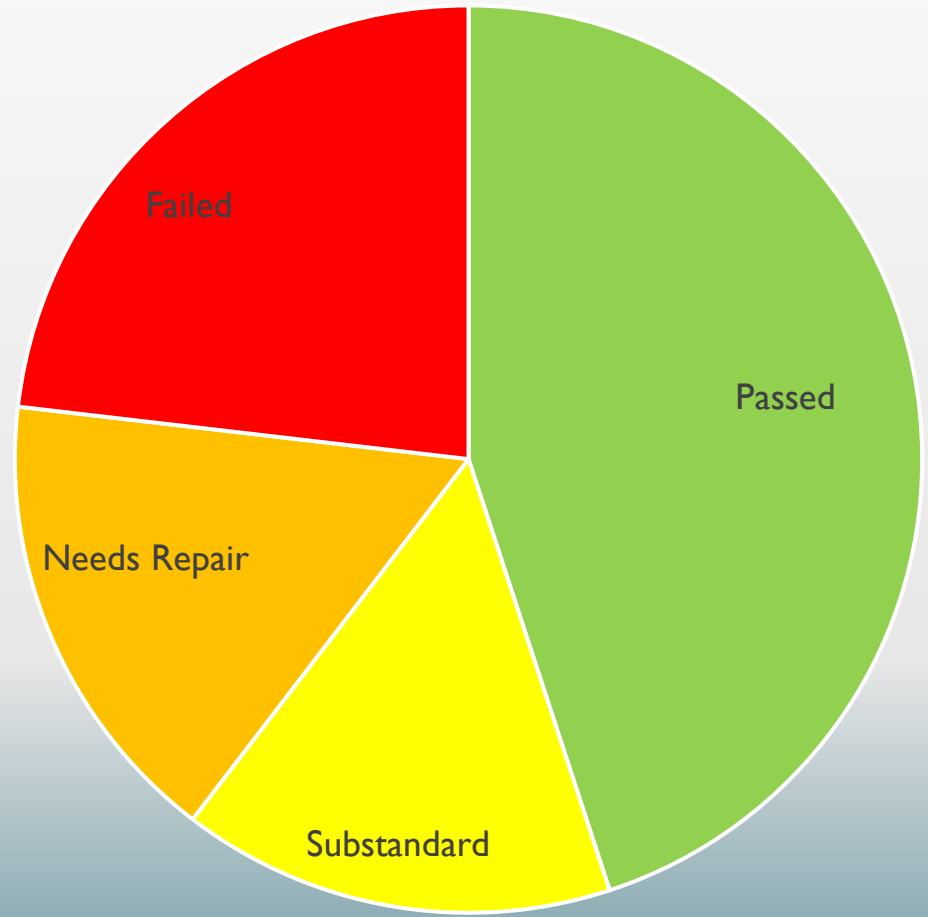
# 2023 Inspection Results

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Passed: 46%  
Need Repair: 16%  
Substandard: 15%  
Failed: 23%

## High Level Summary:

- About half pass
- About half need repair or replacement

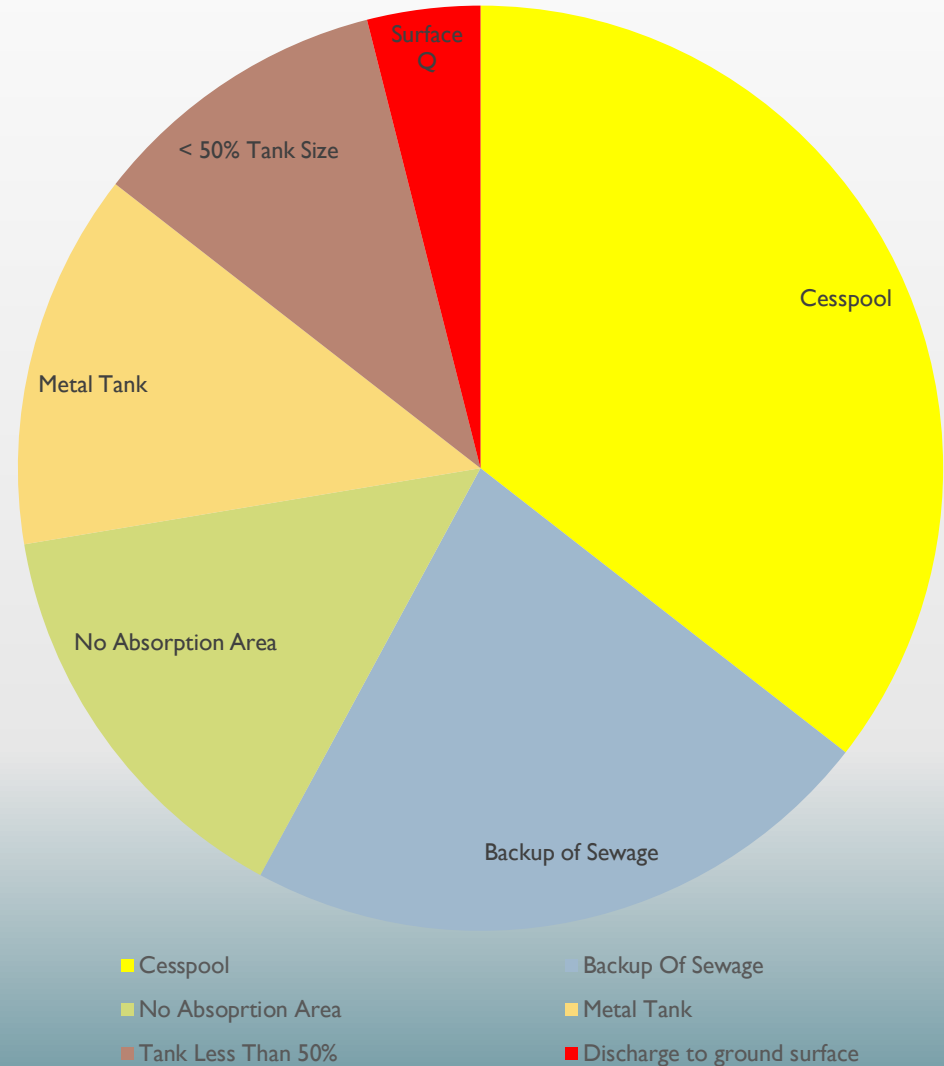




# 2023 Inspection Results

## Failed Systems

Cesspools:	27
Backup of Sewage:	17
No Absorption Area:	11
Metal Tank:	10
Tank Size < 1/2 :	8
Discharge to Surface:	3



# Administration After Inspection

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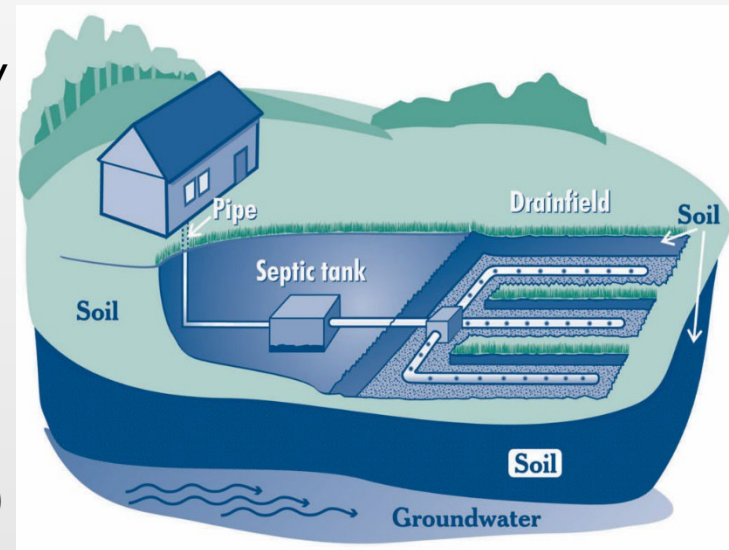
- ▶ LGPC provides a letter to landowner advising them of the system status and next steps
- ▶ Review authority Cc'd
  - ▶ Begin permit process
- ▶ LGPC has no permit jurisdiction
  - ▶ Remains with Review Authority





# Design Standards for New and Replacement Systems in LG Basin

1. Three-foot vertical separation to bedrock/seasonal high groundwater
2. The soil absorption area a minimum of 100 feet from any regulated stream, lake, or APA wetland;
3. No trench length reduction for ETU's or Open-Bottom Gravelless Chambers
  1. Trench length reduction remains for gravelless media-wrapped corrugated pipe sand-lined systems and gravelless geotextile sand filters (e.g. Presby, Eljen, etc.)
4. Upon Redevelopment, wastewater system shall be brought into compliance with applicable design standards



# Variances from Design Standards for Systems in LG Basin

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- ▶ Systems require a variance/waiver when they can't meet:
  - ▶ LGPC, DOH 75-A or DEC sizing standards
- ▶ Variances/waivers come from Review Authority, not LGPC
- ▶ “Do Better” Clause for Variances:
  - ▶ *Phosphorus reduction measures primarily*
  - ▶ *Examples: ETU's, absorption area dosing, phosphorus filters, filtration media, soil depth*
  - ▶ *Industry accepted standards*





# Following Permit and Construction

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- ▶ Landowner Provides Permit, As-Built Approvals/Plans to LGPC
- ▶ LGPC Septic inspection is scheduled for 5 years-out
- ▶ And we start all over...



# Just Getting Started...

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- ▶ 330 systems inspected, 465 accounted for
  - ▶ 13-19% done!...
- ▶ 23% failure rate is a significant challenge for engineers, contractors, and property owners.
  - ▶ Timeframes for remediation can be extended as needed
- ▶ Was this program the right thing to do to protect Lake George?
  - ▶ **Absolutely**





Thank you!



**Joe Thouin, Deputy Director**  
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518-668-9347  
[joe@lgpc.state.ny.us](mailto:joe@lgpc.state.ny.us)

*Photo courtesy of Carl Heilman*



# Lake Associations: Bridge the Gap

## Watershed Management Plan

2010

# Schroon



# Lake

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This Schroon Lake Watershed Management Plan is the culmination of the hard work, knowledge, experience, and dedication of many individuals and organizations.

Over the period of three years, these people came together with the shared goal of setting a vision for the protection of Schroon Lake while maintaining its enjoyment for residents and visitors alike. The development of this important document builds upon many years of local stewardship of the lake, and it encompasses their long-term commitment and perseverance.

The Schroon Lake Watershed Management Planning Committee would like to sincerely thank the following individuals for sharing their time and efforts on this project:



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### NYS DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Stephanie Wojtowicz, Coastal Resources Specialist

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Vincent Kavanagh, P.E., Division of Water

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### WORD OF LIFE COMPLEX

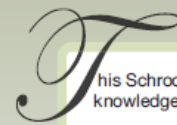
Eric Cordis, P.E., Engineer

### MAPS:

Jim Lieberum, Water Resources Specialist,  
Warren County Soil and Water Conservation District

# Lake Associations: Coordinate

## ► Coordinate and build Relationships



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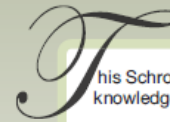
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# Lake Associations: Educate

- ▶ Coordinate and build Relationships
- ▶ Educate
  - ▶ Septic Info for Landowner
  - ▶ Septic Info Short Term Rental Owners

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# Lake Associations: Educate

## 7 WAYS TO BE A GOOD SEPTIC OWNER & HELP PROTECT LAKE GEORGE

**SHIELD YOUR FIELD**  
Divert rain and surface water away and avoid parking vehicles and planting trees on your drainfield.



**DON'T OVERLOAD THE COMMODE**  
Don't flush diapers, wipes or other items meant for a trashcan down the toilet.



**THINK AT THE SINK**  
Limit use of your garbage disposal and avoid pouring fats, grease, solids and harsh chemicals down the drain.

**DRAINFIELD**

**GROUNDWATER RECHARGE**

**SEPTIC TANK**

**PROTECT IT AND INSPECT IT**

A typical septic system should be serviced every one to three years by a septic service professional.

**PUMP YOUR TANK**

Ensure your septic tank is pumped at regular intervals as recommended by a professional.

**DON'T STRAIN YOUR DRAIN**

Use water efficiently and stagger use of water-based appliances, such as your washing machine or dishwasher.

**KEEP IT CLEAN**

If you are on a well, test your drinking water regularly to ensure it remains clean and free of contamination.

**WELL**

**AQUIFER**

For more info, visit [WWW.EPA.GOV/SEPTIC](http://WWW.EPA.GOV/SEPTIC)



Lake Champlain - Lake George  
Regional Planning Board  
P.O. Box 765  
Lake George, NY 12845

## DID YOU KNOW THAT LAKE GEORGE IS DRINKING WATER?

Many residents around the watershed rely on Lake George for clean, safe water for drinking, cooking, and bathing and many more still rely on it for swimming, boating, and fishing.

There are approximately 6,000 private septic systems around Lake George, and keeping yours up-to-date is one way you can help protect the lake. Underperforming septic systems can leak nutrients, pathogens, and bacteria into the water which can lead to a variety of water quality impairments, reduce recreational opportunities, and may be harmful to human health.

## POORLY MAINTAINED OR FAILING SEPTIC SYSTEMS HAVE A NEGATIVE EFFECT ON LAKE GEORGE.

Good maintenance and practices can keep your septic system running for decades and save you thousands of dollars. Thank you for doing your part!

Guidance courtesy of the Environmental Protection Agency's SepticSmart program. For more information, visit [WWW.EPA.GOV/SEPTIC](http://WWW.EPA.GOV/SEPTIC)

Funding provided by:



Lake George  
Park Commission

# Lake Associations: Educate

## THIS PROPERTY IS SERVED BY A SEPTIC SYSTEM

PLEASE FOLLOW THESE TIPS TO MAINTAIN THE HEALTH AND QUALITY OF LAKE GEORGE WATER

### SEPTIC BEST PRACTICES FOR RENTERS:

#### SMART FLUSHING:

- Don't flush non-degradable products like diapers, wipes (even if they say flushable), or hygiene products.
- Keep grease, chemicals, and hair out of the drain.
- Take care not to overload the system - stagger the use of water-based appliances.
- When in doubt, follow an easy rule of thumb: **DO NOT FLUSH ANYTHING BESIDES HUMAN WASTE AND TOILET PAPER DOWN THE DRAIN!**

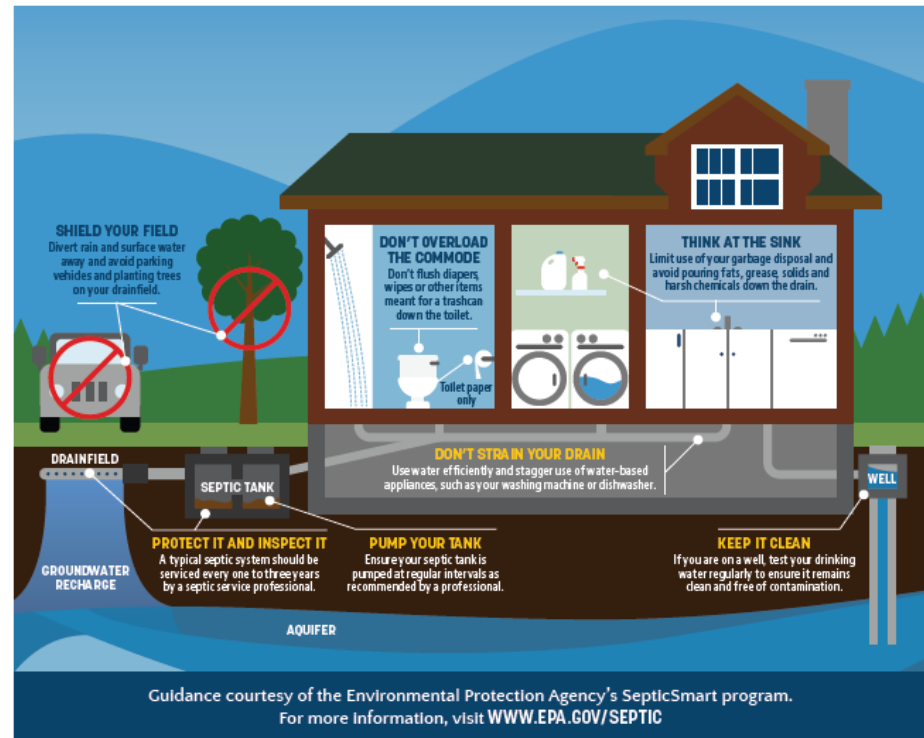
### WHAT IS A SEPTIC SYSTEM?

Septic systems are a way to treat your wastewater and consist of 4 main parts. Piping moves your wastewater from the building into a septic tank. There, solids settle and are digested with the help bacteria while the wastewater moves into what's known as a leach field. There the water is discharged into the lawn and filtered through the soil before reentering the natural water system and, eventually back into Lake George.

IN CASE OF PLUMBING EMERGENCY, PLEASE CONTACT:

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### DID YOU KNOW THAT LAKE GEORGE IS DRINKING WATER?

Many residents around the watershed rely on Lake George for clean, safe water for drinking, cooking, and bathing and many more still rely on it for swimming, boating, and fishing.

There are approximately 6,000 private septic systems around Lake George, and keeping yours up-to-date is one way you can help protect the lake. Underperforming septic systems can leak nutrients, pathogens, and bacteria into the water which can lead to a variety of water quality impairments, reduce recreational opportunities, and may be harmful to human health.

Funding provided by:



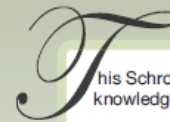
Lake George Park Commission



# Lake Associations: Incentivize

- ▶ Coordinate with Local Resources
- ▶ Educate
  - ▶ Septic Info for Landowner
  - ▶ Septic Info Short Term Rental Owners
- ▶ Incentivize
  - ▶ Subsidize Volunteer Pump-outs
  - ▶ Potential Funding and Assistance through County Soil and Water Conservation Districts Parts B (Projects) & C (Community Conservation)

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



This Schroon Lake Watershed Management Plan is the culmination of the hard work, knowledge, experience, and dedication of many individuals and organizations.

Over the period of three years, these people came together with the shared goal of setting a vision for the protection of Schroon Lake while maintaining its enjoyment for residents and visitors alike. The development of this important document builds upon many years of local stewardship of the lake, and it encompasses their long-term commitment and perseverance.

The Schroon Lake Watershed Management Planning Committee would like to sincerely thank the following individuals for sharing their time and efforts on this project:



## SEPTIC SYSTEMS AND WATER CONSERVATION

With the large number of septic systems on Schroon Lake (discussed in Chapter 3.7), homeowner management of those systems is paramount to protecting the lake. All homeowners should know what type of system they have, its location, and when it was last pumped out. Recent septic pumpout programs conducted by the Warren County SWCD on surrounding lakes have found that the vast majority of homeowners near lakeshores have not pumped their tank within the past five years. In fact, a large number of those individuals did not even know where their septic tank was located.

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- ▶ Advocate for Limited Regulation
  - ▶ Wastewater Disposal Districts
    - ▶ Establish localized inspection program
  - ▶ Septic Inspection Upon Transfer
    - ▶ Motivated owners, Inspections Occurring

