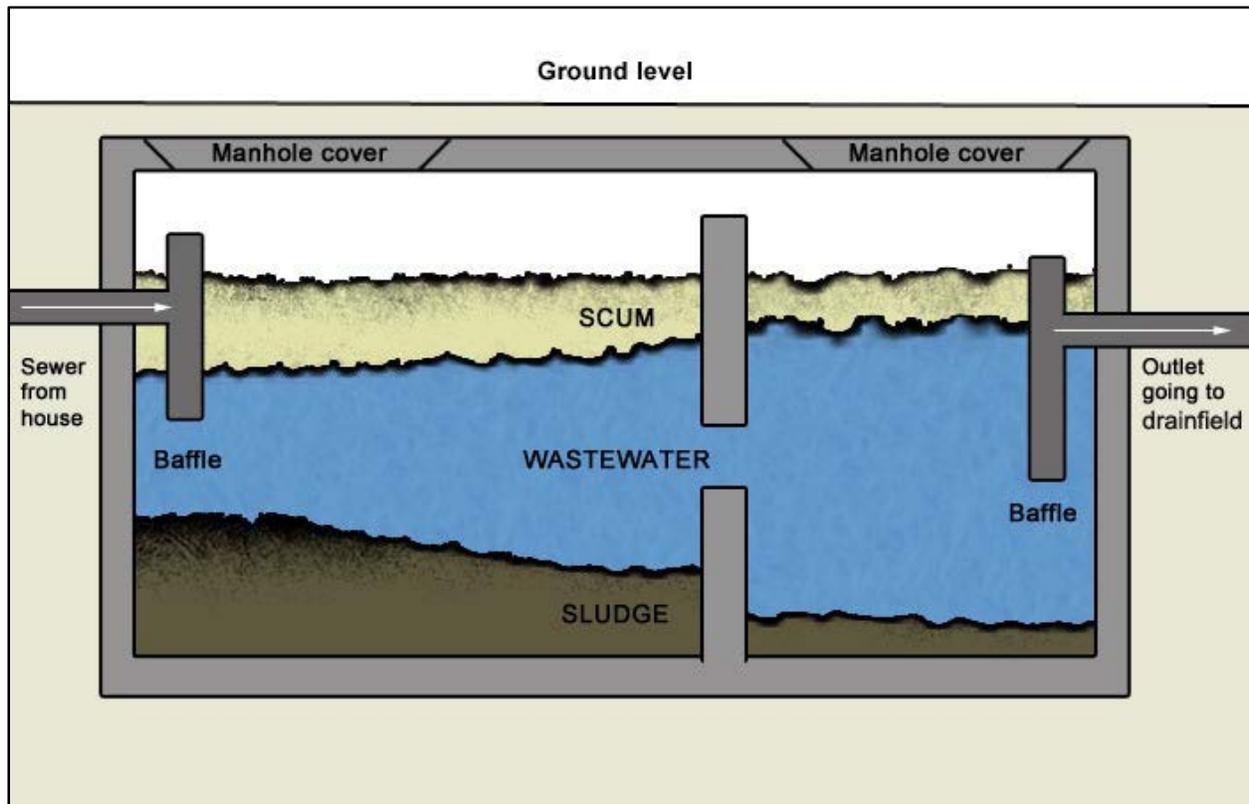


# SEPTIC SYSTEM BEST PRACTICES



Septic systems protect human health and the environment by safely recycling wastewater and returning it to the natural environment. It is your job as the homeowner to be sure this happens effectively and safely. As with your car or furnace, regular maintenance and attention is needed to keep your septic system operating efficiently in a cost effective manner. Doing so will avoid costly repairs, protect the environment and the communities drinking water supply.

This Paper will identify some "Best Practices" for septic system maintenance and provide you with references for further information.

The Board of Trustees of the Surfside Homeowners Association wants you to be well informed on the proper use and maintenance of your septic system. Failing septic systems and disposal of dangerous substances via a septic system has the potential to enter the Association's water source. It is in all of our interest to protect groundwater.



### **Septic Tank Functions:**

Receives all wastewater from the residence. Separates the solids (sludge and scum) from the wastewater flow and stores separated solids. Allows the clarified wastewater (effluent) to pass to the drainfield.

The solids are held until mechanically removed. Anaerobic (oxygen-less) bacteria work to break down wastes, clarify the liquid for delivery to the drainfield to complete the treatment process.

### **Drainfield Functions:**

Destroy pathogens (bacteria, viruses). Natural populations of soil microorganisms, in a properly sized and designed drainfield, will destroy pathogens in wastewater.

Acts as a natural filter for nutrients, such as phosphorus, through adsorption or chemical bonding to soil particles limiting mobility to groundwater.

Allows treated water and nutrients to enter the groundwater, evaporate, or transpire through plants.

### **Best Practices:**

- Inspect Septic Tank solid levels every 24 months. Pump as needed.
- Inspect System components (baffles, screens, pumps, risers, etc.) every 12 months. Repair or replace as needed.
- Maintain vegetative cover over drainfield.
- Keep all vehicles off of the drainfield.
- Do not plant shrubs or trees on or near the drainfield.
- Conserving water (repair leaks, low flow fixtures, etc.) will reduce treatment stress in the septic tank and the drainfield.
- Don't flush or wash down the sink anything that may damage your septic system or contaminate the environment, (i.e. Cat litter, chemicals, coffee grounds, cooking oil, food, cotton balls or swabs, disinfectants, disposable diapers, grease, paint or paint thinners, pesticides or poisons, petroleum products, paper (other than toilet tissue), solvents, latex gloves...)
- Don't use a garbage disposal.
- Don't use septic tank additives.
- Don't use antibacterial soaps, automatic bowl cleaners, chlorine bleach (use peroxide bleach instead), and USE biodegradable and phosphate free dishwashing and laundry soaps.

### **More Information:**

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Washington State Department of Health Source Water Protection Program:

<http://www.doh.wa.gov/CommunityandEnvironment/DrinkingWater/SourceWater/SourceWaterProtection>

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Washington State Department of Health Source Water Protection Program:

<http://www.doh.wa.gov/CommunityandEnvironment/WastewaterManagement/SepticSystem>

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Environmental Protection Agency Septic Smart Program:

<https://www.epa.gov/septic>