

## Septic Systems and Water Quality

What do you think is the most common source of groundwater contamination in the U.S.? What if we told you that it is also the largest producer of wastewater in the U.S.? What would your guess be? If you answered septic systems, you guessed correctly!

Septic systems have long been known for bacterial and nitrate pollution of our ground and surface waters. The pollution can affect us all. If septic systems are not maintained properly, the leaching liquid will most likely pollute your drinking water and prevent swimming at nearby lakes and rivers. In addition, high concentrations of nitrates can cause blue-baby syndrome.

Therefore, it is important to properly maintain our septic systems in order to avoid any harmful environmental effects. Primary tips:

- ❖ Do not dispose of household hazardous wastes in sinks or toilets (caustic drain cleaners, chlorine bleach)
- ❖ Do not dispose of items such as dental floss, feminine products, diapers, and cat litter in the toilet
- ❖ Pump the septic tank as needed (contact the County Health Department for recommendations)
- ❖ Do not use septic tank cleaners because the chemicals in these cleaners can be harmful
- ❖ Conserve water (more water puts a strain on the septic system)



### For More Information

#### Call:

*Berrien County Health Dept*  
269- 926-7121

*Cass County Health Dept*  
269-445-5280

For more information on proper septic maintenance and warning signs of failing septic systems visit these web pages:

[www.swmpc.org/downloads/Septic.pdf](http://www.swmpc.org/downloads/Septic.pdf) or [www.inspect-ny.com/septbook.htm](http://www.inspect-ny.com/septbook.htm).

Maintain your septic systems and protect our water.

For more information on watersheds in southwest Michigan visit [www.swmpc.org/water.asp](http://www.swmpc.org/water.asp).

