

On October 6, 2006 Peach Bottom Township proposed and adopted an on-lot sewage disposal system management program in accordance with the guidelines established by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection. Following is a program summary that should answer most of your questions about this mandatory program.

## **PEACH BOTTOM TOWNSHIP'S ON-LOT SEWAGE DISPOSAL MANAGEMENT ORDINANCE PROGRAM SUMMARY**

### **1. What is On-lot Sewage Systems Management?**

Over 1800 properties in Peach Bottom Township rely upon on-lot sewage disposal systems for the proper treatment of wastewater. An on-lot sewage disposal system usually consists of a buried tank to capture solids and grease and a drain field for the disposal of the remaining liquid. Although an on-lot sewage disposal system is a very simple and relatively inexpensive way to treat wastewater, it must be maintained to be long-lasting and trouble free. Peach Bottom Township has established a program to ensure that all property owners follow a few simple procedures to keep their on-lot sewage disposal systems properly maintained by periodic inspections and removal of accumulated solids from the septic tanks.

### **2. Why is an ordinance needed?**

Many people do not really think about septic tanks, which are usually out of sight and out of mind. Sometimes, it is only after problems arise, such as sewage backups, contaminated wells, or problems in selling a home, that attention is paid to septic systems. The majority of the properties in Peach Bottom Township with septic systems also have on-lot wells for drinking water. Failure to properly maintain a septic system can lead to premature failure of the septic system, contamination of area drinking water wells, and transmission of waterborne diseases. It is the Township's desire to help ensure that the groundwater resources remain clean and safe for drinking.

The cost to repair and/or replace a failing on-lot septic system can be a very substantial expense that may be delayed or avoided altogether with proper septic system maintenance. The construction of a replacement septic system requires adequate soils and space, but many lots do not have either. In addition, the extension of public sewer to the more remote and rural areas of the Township is not an economically feasible way to handle wastewater for individual residences. The ordinance requiring the routine and regular maintenance is part of the Township's effort to reduce the need for and cost of replacement systems, to delay extension of or construction of public sewers and to protect the environment.

### **3. Why is Peach Bottom Township enacting an On-lot Sewage Disposal System Management Ordinance now?**

In 2006, the Township updated its Act 537 Sewage Facilities Plan. This plan is required by the Pennsylvania Sewage Facilities Act and is administered by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to ensure that the Township is providing adequate sewage treatment facilities and protecting the public health by preventing the discharge of untreated or inadequately treated sewage. DEP requires that the Act 537 Plan address both public sewage facilities and private on-lot septic systems. DEP encouraged that Peach Bottom Township's Plan includes on-lot septic system management.

### **4. Do other municipalities in York County have on-lot management programs?**

Yes, several municipalities in York County have adopted on-lot management and more are considering programs as they update their sewage facilities planning. The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) encourages each municipality with on-lot septic systems to enact on-lot management. DEP provides annual subsidies to reimburse municipalities for 50% of the administrative cost of the program.

### **5. What are property owner's responsibilities under the program?**

All septic system owners must make arrangements with the Sewage Enforcement Officer for the inspection of the on-site sewage disposal system located on the owner's property within 30 days of receiving notice from the Township. Arrangements must also be made with a pumper/hauler (licensed by York County Solid Waste and Refuse Authority) of their choice to have the system pumped when the Sewage Enforcement Officer is there for the inspection.

Prior to the date of inspection, the owner must extend to the surface grade the manhole of any septic tank and must cause any cesspool or drywell to be accessible for inspection. An application for inspection must be completed and the fee must be submitted **Payable to Peach Bottom Township**. All septic system owners must have their systems pumped and inspected at least once every five years.

**6. How much does the program cost?**

There is a fee to Peach Bottom Township for the inspection and administration of the program. The cost of the pumping of the tank will depend on the fees charged by your septic pumping company. There are about 30 private firms that are licensed by York County Solid Waste and Refuse Authority to provide septic pumping services in York County.

**7. What if I just had my septic system pumped?**

Property owners who have had their septic systems pumped within one year prior to receiving this notice from the Township will not be the first to be required to have the inspection completed. The Township currently receives a copy of all pump receipts for all properties in the Township when they are pumped. All properties must have the inspection and be pumped within the next five years. You can contact the Township to request the inspection when you plan to pump your system the next time.

**8. What if I want to have my system pumped more frequently than every five years?**

You are welcome and encouraged to pump more often than every five years. But, the system **MUST** be inspected every five years by the Township Sewage Enforcement Officer to meet the requirements of the 537 Plan, so plan accordingly.

**9. What if a problem is found during the inspection?**

The Township Sewage Enforcement Officer will work with the property owner to resolve the problem. Sometimes the solutions involve simple, inexpensive steps that do not require system modification or replacement. The Township Sewage Enforcement Officer will consider all feasible alternatives before issuing a repair or replacement notice.

**10. What will happen if I do not comply with the ordinance?**

The Township Supervisors hope the Township citizens will fully comply with the provisions of the ordinance. The ordinance has been developed to protect public health, the water resources, and the investment of property owners in their on-lot systems. If you do not comply with any of the provisions of this ordinance, you will be cited by the Township and shall be subject to proceedings before the District Justice. Upon conviction by the District Justice, you will be subject to a fine of \$1,000.00 plus all court costs. Each day that a violation continues constitutes a separate offense. This penalty provision is similar to that of other Township ordinances.

**11. What else should I be doing to maintain my septic system?**

The most important action to maintain the septic system is to have the system pumped out on a regular basis. However, what is put into the system can also impact its operation. Only sewage and normal domestic wastes should be discharged into the system. Industrial wastes, automobile oil and other domestic oil, excessive fats and grease, toxic and hazardous substances must not be placed down the drain. You should also consider composting or disposal of food preparation wastes in the trash instead of a garbage disposal unit, which greatly increases the load to the septic system. Clean surface or ground water, including spring water, water from the roof or cellar drains, and water from the basement sump pump must also be kept out of the system. The system should be maintained with a grass cover and heavy equipment or vehicles should never be driven over the drain field. Also, periodically check your toilets and sinks to make sure there are no leaks. A leaking toilet can quickly overload a drain field.

**Should you have any further questions concerning this matter, or you would like to set up an appointment for your inspection, please contact the Township office by phone Monday – Friday from 8:00 am. to 3:00 pm. at 717-456-5083. You may also contact us by e-mail at [pbtpw@clearviewcatv.net](mailto:pbtpw@clearviewcatv.net). We will be happy to assist you.**