

Caring for your septic system: Part 2

Your septic system is your responsibility

Septic systems can provide a practical on-site option for managing domestic sewage disposal. A well-designed and maintained septic system can effectively treat household sewage, enhance the value of your property, prevent costly replacement or repairs, and help protect the environment by reducing the risk of surface water and drinking water contamination.

Surprisingly, homeowners may not always know the location of their septic system, or if one exists on their property. Older cabins may have been replaced by larger, more permanent homes with no upgrade to their septic system or field. This can result in an ineffective septic system that was not meant to handle the load that is placed on it and can have detrimental environmental impacts.

A homeowner must obtain the services of an authorized person such as a registered onsite wastewater practitioner if they wish to construct a new septic system, alter or repair an existing one. The authorized person assesses both the owner's needs and the property's capability for sewage treatment and dispersal, and then designs a system that meets those needs. Once the septic system is working, it is the homeowner's responsibility to ensure that a maintenance plan is followed.

"A properly maintained septic system has a life span of approximately 20-30 years", says Larry Sholinder of Sholinder and MacKay Excavating, who is also a registered Planner, Installer and Maintenance Provider with the British Columbia OnSite Sewage Association.

Each household is different. The maintenance needs of a septic system vary depending on the number of residents, size of house, proximity to creeks, streams or lakes, and septic system age. It is critical for property owners to know and properly maintain their septic systems.

For more information on properly maintaining your septic system contact the Lake Windermere Project at 341-6898. You can also visit the project office located in the old District of Invermere office beside the Invermere Community Centre. The Lake Windermere Project is a long-term, comprehensive stewardship program dedicated to safeguarding the health of our lake. The Lake Windermere Project is made possible by generous support from Wildsight, Environment Canada, Columbia Basin Trust and the Real Estate Foundation of B.C.