

The Decentralized Wastewater MOU Partnership has assembled this social media toolkit for use in sharing and promoting the messages of SepticSmart Week.

Decentralized Wastewater MOU Partnership: SepticSmart Week Social Media Toolkit

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Decentralized Wastewater MOU Partners' SepticSmart Week Social Media Toolkit



How to Use this MOU Partnership Toolkit

Welcome! As a Decentralized Wastewater MOU Partner, this SepticSmart Week Social Media Toolkit contains material and information your organization can use to advertise and promote SepticSmart Week. In addition to the basic social media messages and outreach material, it includes tips and methods to track the information you share on your social media channels. You can either copy these messages directly or customize them to reach your audience. Have fun and remember to be SepticSmart!

What You Should Know About SepticSmart Week

SepticSmart Week is an annual event focused on educating homeowners and communities on the proper care and maintenance of their septic systems. Federal, state and local governments, the private sector, communities and academia, all participate in SepticSmart Week. You can participate too by sharing these social media messages, promoting the outreach information and advertising SepticSmart Week.

SepticSmart Week Core Messages

- Protect It & Inspect It! (Day 1)
- Think at the Sink! (Day 2)
- Don't Overload the Commode! (Day 3)
- Pump Your Tank! (Day 4)
- Don't Strain Your Drain! (Day 5)
- Shield Your Field! (Day 6)
- Test Your Drinking Water Well! (Day 7)

These are the core messages to promote during SepticSmart week using the associated social media materials and images. The MOU Partners suggest focusing on one core message per day of SepticSmart Week. You'll see in the other sections (as above) that a core message is selected for each day.

Know Your Audience

One of the first things to consider with social media is identifying the audience you are trying to reach. Are you targeting professionals? Pumpers? Installers? County public health officials? Individual homeowners? Tailor your social media messages so you provide your audience with relevant tips, facts and resources to assist them in getting out the core messages of SepticSmart Week.

Social Media for MOU Partners to Use During SepticSmart Week

From Eric Casey and Donna Fiorentino, NOWRA; Katy Lackey and Harry Zhang, WE&RF

Hashtag

- Official hashtag: #SepticSmart

Twitter Messages

- Remember, twitter messages or “tweets” are 140 characters or less!
- **One week in advance (September 11, 2017)**
 - [PDF](#)
 - Next week is #SepticSmart Week! How will you participate? <https://www.epa.gov/septic>
- **Day 1 / September 18, 2017 / Protect it and inspect it!**
 - Today we're kicking off #SepticSmart Week! Look for our tips to stay #SepticSmart year-round <https://www.epa.gov/septic>
 - #SepticSmart Tip: Get your septic system inspected every 1-3 years by a professional to keep it clean <https://www.epa.gov/septic>
 - [Picture](#)
- **Day 2 / September 19, 2017 / Think at the Sink!**
 - [Picture](#)
 - Think at the sink, limit use of a garbage disposal. Get the scoop on #SepticSmart maintenance by visiting <https://www.epa.gov/septic>
- **Day 3 / September 20, 2017 / Don't Overload the Commode!**
 - [Picture](#)
 - Your toilet is not a trashcan! Don't overload the commode! #SepticSmart tips for maintaining your septic system <https://www.epa.gov/septic>
- **Day 4 / September 21, 2017 / Pump Your Tank!**
 - [PDF](#)
 - #SepticSmart Tip: Get your septic system pumped every 3-5 years to maintain its lifespan <https://www.epa.gov/septic>
- **Day 5 / September 22, 2017 / Don't Strain Your Drain!**
 - [Picture](#)
 - #SepticSmart Tip: Learn what can and cannot go down the drain to keep your septic system running smoothly <https://www.epa.gov/septic>
- **Day 6 / September 23, 2017 / Shield Your Field!**
 - [Picture](#)
 - Shield Your Field! Learn more about what can damage your septic system. Be #SepticSmart <https://www.epa.gov/septic>

- **Day 7 / September 24, 2017 / Test Your Drinking Water Well!**
 - [Picture](#)
 - Test the cleanliness of your water well to keep your family healthy. More #SepticSmart tips at <https://www.epa.gov/septic>

Facebook Postings

- **One week in advance: (September 11, 2017):**
 - [PDF](#)
 - Did you know one in five U.S. homes have septic systems? Yours may be one of them. If your septic system is not properly maintained, you may be risking your family's health, potentially polluting the environment, and flushing thousands of dollars down the drain. We're gearing up for the start of #SepticSmart Week Sept. 18-22. Learn how to participate here <https://www.epa.gov/septic>
- **Day 1 / September 18, 2017 / Protect it and inspect it!**
 - [Picture](#)
 - Today we're kicking off the start of #SepticSmart Week! This week we recognize the importance of properly caring for and maintaining septic systems. You can help protect the environment and public health by having your septic system routinely inspected every 1-3 years. Learn more here <https://www.epa.gov/septic>
- **Day 2 / September 19, 2017 / Think at the Sink!**
 - [Picture](#)
 - Think at the sink, limit use of a garbage disposal to prevent too many nutrients from going to your septic system. Also, avoid rinsing coffee grounds or pouring grease into the sink. Get the scoop on #SepticSmart maintenance by visiting <https://www.epa.gov/septic>
- **Day 3 / September 20, 2017 / Don't Overload the Commode!**
 - [Picture](#)
 - Your toilet is not a trashcan! Don't overload the commode! Flushing non-degradable products can clog your system and cause sewage to backup into your home or cause a septic failure. Instead of flushing, dispose of items in the trashcan. Read more #SepticSmart tips for maintaining your septic system: <https://www.epa.gov/septic>
- **Day 4 / September 21, 2017 / Pump Your Tank!**
 - [PDF](#)
 - Attention Homeowners! One way to be #SepticSmart is to pump your tank every 3-5 years. Properly caring for a septic system can be tough if you never owned a septic system before. With Septic Sam's Top 10 List, learn easy ways to maintain your system and get years of use from it. Check out our toolkit <https://www.epa.gov/septic>
- **Day 5 / September 22, 2017 / Don't Strain Your Drain!**

- [Picture](#)
- Learn what should and should not go down your drain. Putting the wrong items into your septic system can put the health of your family and neighbors at risk. Visit our website to become #SepticSmart <https://www.epa.gov/septic>

- **Day 6 / September 23, 2017 / Shield Your Field!**
 - [Picture](#)
 - Love gardening? We do too! Your septic system does not! Be careful where you plant as roots can break the casing and damage the pipes in your drainfield. Parking your car close to your drainfield can also damage it. Learn how to shield your field and be #SepticSmart by visiting <https://www.epa.gov/septic>

- **Day 7 / September 24, 2017 / Test Your Drinking Water Well!**
 - [Picture](#)
 - Maintaining your septic system helps to prevent contamination to your drinking water well. Test the cleanliness of your water well to keep your family healthy. More #SepticSmart tips at <https://www.epa.gov/septic>

Instagram

- Same as above Facebook posts

LinkedIn

- Same as above Facebook posts

Website Homepages & Web graphics

- Include the “Save-the-Date” flyer on the homepage of your website
 - [2017 SSW Save the Date Flyer](#)
- Download the SepticSmart Week 2017 seal
 - [2017 SepticSmart Week Seal](#)



- Download the SepticSmart Week generic seal (no dates)
 - [SepticSmart Week Seal \(no dates\)](#)



Blogs

Promoting Preventative Maintenance in Rural America

By Karen D. McBride, Rural Development Environmental Specialist, Rural Community Assistance Corporation (Western Rural Community Assistance Partnership)

My job as a Technical Assistance Provider (TAP) is to work with under-served, often distressed, rural communities. This reflects communities who don't have many resources when it comes to wastewater treatment and disposal, and can't afford high rates for central sewer systems. These are communities that have had septic systems for years but may never have had the opportunity to learn how to maintain them properly. In many of these communities, they are limited to one or two septic tank pumpers and pumping only occurs when there is a problem. This results in greater cost of repair or replacement and it isn't always easy or affordable to make this crisis correction.

Preventative maintenance not only saves the community from costly last-minute repairs, but can also be an opportunity for a community member to become a service provider. TAPs assist local community members with resources to become a service provider. We also establish on-going inspection and monitoring for individual septic systems. These activities make a significant impact to both public and environmental health, reduce the number of failed systems, limit the often times expensive cost of repair and replacement, and result in systems consistently last longer, as designed. Many of our communities are also in close enough proximity to one another where a service provider could service two or three communities in a geographical area. Sharing this resource provides a Circuit Rider Service Provider approach and can often keep the cost of providing on-going inspection and monitoring more affordable to a small community by creating economies of scale. It also promotes jobs for septic tank pumpers as ongoing preventive maintenance creates routine and not reactionary work.

The more we can approach preventive maintenance as a job opportunity, by establishing more inspection and monitoring services, the more we can develop a history trail. A history trail then gives us the advantage of being better prepared to pump, perform maintenance and keep systems in pristine condition. The ultimate goal is to create understanding that septic systems can be a long term means of wastewater treatment and disposal and eliminate the belief that they are a temporary solution until the community can afford sewer.

We have communities and Tribes in California where this approach is beneficial, but we need to keep expanding these opportunities.

For service provider (Inspector Certificate of Completion Training) training opportunities, see the National Association of Wastewater Technicians link at <http://www.nawt.org/courses-offered.html>

For Case Studies of community inspection programs, see USEPA Office of Wastewater Management website <https://www.epa.gov/septic/septic-systems-case-studies-and-demonstration-projects>

Biography: Karen D. McBride

As a Rural Development Environmental Specialist, Karen provides technical assistance and training at various conferences, institutes, workshops, clients and agencies. Karen has been with the Rural Community Assistance Corporation for twenty years and thirteen years ago worked part time as a Visiting Training Specialist for the National Environmental Training Center at West Virginia University. She was the originator of the Sea Ranch Onsite Wastewater Disposal Zone, the third Septic System Inspection and Monitoring program established in California. She was a founding member and past president of the California Onsite Wastewater Association. Karen has worked on numerous committees including the USEPA Speakers Bureau for Wastewater Management Voluntary Guidelines, Expert Panel member to the National Small Flows Onsite Demonstration Project Phase 4, USEPA steering committee to assist in the development of the Handbook for Managing On-Site and Clustered (Decentralized) Wastewater Treatment Systems and a consultant to the State of New Mexico, community of Willard, Septic System Survey Analysis. Her education includes studies at the School of Engineering Program in the Operation of Wastewater Treatment Plants, California State University Sacramento and in Wastewater Technology, Orange Coast College Costa Mesa, California. Karen is a California State Certified Wastewater Operator.

The Why and How of Maintaining Your Septic System

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In honor of Septic Smart week, let's discuss something that is generally out of sight, but extremely important in our homes; our septic systems. Onsite wastewater treatment systems (OWTS), or septic systems, when properly maintained are an effective method for treating wastewater from homes and businesses. A conventional OWTS is a two-stage treatment process comprised of primary treatment (settling of solids in a septic tank), and secondary treatment (biological and chemical treatment within the soils of the absorption field). There are new innovative systems for sites with constraints (size, soils, proximity to water etc.) as well as systems that utilize composting toilets that can easily be installed in our homes.

The average lifespan of a properly maintained septic system is 30 years. Failing or ineffective OWTSs add excessive nutrients to our waterways feeding macrophytes (aquatic plants) and algae, causing excessive growth and nearshore algal blooms. This results in a slimy muck on rocks and docks. This muck can hinder recreation and decrease property values. Many camps and older homes near streams and lakes have old, undersized or ineffective systems that leach nutrients and other pollutants into surface water and groundwater.

Wastewater is comprised of raw sewage from toilet and graywater from showers, sinks and washers. Both contain nutrients that will feed algal growth. Raw sewage contains more nitrogen, while graywater contains more phosphorus. Depending on the limited nutrient of a waterbody, the sewage has the potential of causing a cyanobacteria toxic harmful algal bloom.

Out of sight, should not be out of mind. With our local water bodies already experiencing toxic algal blooms and some being impaired for E. coli, we know that dilution is not a solution to the problem. Even if we can't see or smell the sewage, it has an impact on the aquatic ecosystem. To protect our valuable water resources and property, we should follow septic system best management practices, which include:

- Pump out systems every two to three years and have it inspected by a professional;
- Use water efficiently, install low flow toilets and water saving fixtures, also use the proper setting on our washing machine and spread the washing out over the week and not all on one day;
- Do not use septic tank additives;
- Avoid chemical drain openers for clogged drains, try boiling water;
- Don't pour grease or oil down the drain;
- Don't rinse coffee grounds down the sink;
- Don't pour household chemicals (toxics or cleaners) or pharmaceuticals down the drain;
- Eliminate or limit use of garbage disposals;
- Don't flush non-degradable products;
- Don't allow roof drains, basement sump pumps or curtain drains to empty into your septic;
- Do not discharge water softeners backwash into your system: Know where your tank and system are and;
- Don't drive over or plant large trees within your absorption field.

Know the early warning signs of a system that is not functioning, such as slow draining, pipes that gurgle and have bubbles, soggy soil over drainage field and soil settling over the tank. Serious signs of a failure include smell of sewage and the septic backing up into your home.

Regular pumping and routine inspection of an OWTS is one of the most important aspects of a proper operation and maintenance schedule. Failure to maintain and inspect your tank can result in potential health hazards to you, your pets, the environment and cause aesthetic nuisances. Additionally, reduction of wasteflow through conservation and wise use of water and efficient fixtures reduces demand on the system and improves the lifespan of your system. Finally, eliminating harmful products from entering your septic system will increase the system's efficiency by protecting the vital biological components.

How to Guide: Governor, Mayor & Local SepticSmart Week Proclamations

From Christl Tate, NEHA

SepticSmart Week typically takes place on the third week of September every year. This annual event focuses on educating homeowners and communities on the proper care and maintenance of their septic systems, as well as protecting public health, the environment, and one's property value. To make the

most of SepticSmart Week, EPA and the Decentralized Wastewater MOU Partnership have developed numerous outreach materials and resources available at www.epa.gov/septic

Monthly Planning Guide to a SepticSmart Week Proclamation

MAY

- Start early!
- Begin gathering information, create a timeline

JUNE

- Identify any established procedures around securing a proclamation
- Ensure you have leadership support and make sure that is communicated in each step
 - Save email from your leadership approving initiative as your Governor's Office may ask for it
- Develop the wording for the proclamation (see EPA sample [proclamations](#))
 - Make sure it is short and to the point
 - Explain how it will benefit communities
 - Make sure the proclamation is in Microsoft Word for easy editing
 - Write the Governor's Proclamation yourself in plain text, without any formatting. This makes it easy for the Governor's Office to simply use your draft and add on their Governor Proclamation formatting
 - See 2017 proclamation templates found [here](#)
 - Check out examples of previous years' proclamations (<https://www.epa.gov/septic/septicsmart-week-2016-proclamations>)
- Draft memo from agency head to your state's appointed health official (i.e. Secretary of Health, Surgeon General, etc.)
- Draft memo from Health Official to Governor's Office

JULY

- Enlist support from other state/local health departments
- Identify a point person in the process, whether at the State Health Department or Governor's Office that you can check in with
 - Keeping in touch will help you to know the status of your request and if there is anything missing that you need to submit
 - Knowing this early on is important so that you do not run out of time to make corrections or additions
 - Ensure memos are sent from agency head to health official
 - Follow up with emails and phone calls

AUGUST

- When you receive your proclamation- share it! Share it at local events, social media posts and news releases.
 - The proclamation gets posted on the governor's webpage, bringing more attention to your cause
 - The proclamation adds more weight to your social media posts and increases the chance of it being picked up and shared across wider audiences

SEPTEMBER

- Share! Share! Share!
- Measure your impact!
 - Metrics matter! As much as possible, identify the impact of your outreach activities.
 - Connect with partners to measure impact
 - Are calls regarding septic system operation and maintenance increasing?
 - Are local health departments seeing an increase in calls?

Other Tips and Ideas to Promote SepticSmart Week

- Take full advantage of the [materials](#) provided by EPA! These materials can be modified to fit your unique community regulations and needs. Your jurisdictional contact information can also be added.
- Share information with other jurisdictions as early as possible so they can have time to add it to their outreach calendar.
- Create partnerships with industry to promote SepticSmart Week and share informational flyers. Some septic system service providers have offered a discount for services booked during SepticSmart Week creating a win-win situation. This works well in the Val-Pack coupon mailers.
- Bus ads and billboards can be used throughout the state and reach a lot of people
- Reach out to other agencies for opportunities to share information. Some ideas include:
 - Highway signs or other “outdoor” advertising
 - Permitting/Inspection
- Look within the health department for other outlets:
 - Public Health Nurse home visits
 - Healthy home inspections
 - Restaurant inspections for establishments that rely on septic

Outreach Materials

- Quick tips, flyers, website graphics, postcards, brochures, mail inserts, guides, door hangers can be found on EPA’s website [here](#).
- [Top 10 Ways to Be a Good Septic Owner](#) - most downloaded graphic in 2016.

Images & Graphics

- Use pictures to tell the story!
- Photos or images associated with each of the SepticSmart Week core messages:
 - [Protect it and inspect it!](#)
 - [Think at the sink!](#)
 - [Don't overload the commode!](#)
 - [Pump your tank!](#)
 - [Shield your field!](#)
 - [Test your drinking water well!](#)
- Use the home infographic with core SepticSmart messages:
 - [Do Your Part Infographic](#)

Press Releases, Public Service Announcements (PSAs) & Radio Advertisements

Press Releases

From Frances Bothfeld, ACWA

On Monday, September 18, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency – in conjunction with federal, state and local government and private sector partners – will kick off its fifth annual SepticSmart Week (September 18th-22nd) to encourage American homeowners and communities to properly maintain their septic systems.

More than 26 million homes in the United States – or one in five households – depend on septic systems to treat wastewater. If not maintained, failing septic systems can contaminate groundwater and harm the environment by releasing bacteria, viruses, and household toxics to local waterways. Proper septic system maintenance protects public health and the environment and saves the homeowner money through avoided costly repairs.

Simple tips for homeowners:

- **Protect It and Inspect It:** Homeowners should generally have their system inspected every three years by a qualified professional or according to their state or local health department's recommendations. Tanks should be pumped when necessary, typically every three to five years.
- **Think at the Sink:** Avoid pouring fats, grease, and solids down the drain. These substances can clog a system's pipes and drainfield.
- **Don't Overload the Commode:** Only put things in the drain or toilet that belong there. For example, coffee grounds, dental floss, disposable diapers and wipes, feminine hygiene products, cigarette butts, and cat litter can all clog and potentially damage septic systems.
- **Don't Strain Your Drain:** Be water-efficient and spread out water use. Fix plumbing leaks and install faucet aerators and water-efficient products. Spread out laundry and dishwasher loads throughout the day – too much water at once can overload a system that hasn't been pumped recently.
- **Shield Your Field:** Remind guests not to park or drive on a system's drainfield, where the vehicle's weight could damage buried pipes or disrupt underground flow.
- **Pump your Tank:** Routinely pumping your tank can prevent your septic system from premature failure, which can lead to groundwater contamination.
- **Test Your Drinking Water Well:** If septic systems aren't properly maintained, leaks can contaminate well water. Testing your drinking water well is the best way to ensure your well water is free from contaminants.

EPA's SepticSmart Program educates homeowners about proper septic system care and maintenance all year long. In addition, it serves as an online resource for industry practitioners, local governments, and community organizations, providing access to tools to educate clients and residents.

For information on SepticSmart Week or tips on how to properly maintain your septic system, visit www.epa.gov/septicmart.

From Eric Casey, NOWRA

Many homeowners are aware that proper operation and maintenance of their septic system is important to ensure that it performs properly. There are many things that a homeowner can do themselves to ensure a properly functioning septic system, but without exception, all systems require some level of service from a qualified professional to ensure that they function effectively over the long-term. As part of the US Environmental Protection Agency's 5th Annual SeptiSmart Week (September 18-22), the following information is intended to help homeowners better understand the need for professional maintenance of their septic system, how to locate a qualified professional in their area, and what to look for in a service contract with those professionals. This information is adapted from "[A Homeowner's Guide to Evaluating Service Contracts](#)," published by CIDWT –the Consortium of Institutes to Decentralized Wastewater Treatment.

Why does a septic system require servicing from a trained professional?

Much like a heating and air conditioning system, a septic system represents a significant investment for a homeowner. Repairs to or replacement of a malfunctioning septic system can be expensive, typically costing thousands of dollars, so it makes sense to protect that investment by contracting with a qualified professional who can detect problems before they lead to a malfunction. Early detection makes it possible to take remedial action before a system becomes a public health hazard, a detriment to the environment, or a liability for the homeowner. Some counties and states have regulations that require a certain amount of system management. Whether or not they are required in your area, routine service will ensure that you can avoid expensive or costly surprises.

What type of service is needed and how often frequently does it need to be serviced?

What kinds of service and their frequency depends on a variety of factors, including the site conditions surrounding the septic system, the complexity of the technologies inside the septic system, how the system is used, and local regulations. The best way to determine service needs and frequency is to contact your local permitting authority. In most but not all cases that will be the local health department. They should be able to tell you the location of the system on your property, the technologies your system uses to treat your wastewater, and any local regulations requiring regular service to your system. If they are unable to provide that information, contact the system manufacturer if you know who that is. In some cases it may be necessary to hire a professional to inspect your system to determine your service needs and frequency. Ask your local regulatory authority if they have a list of qualified inspectors.

How to locate a local service provider

Contact the local permitting authority to obtain a listing of the professionals in your area approved for service on your particular system. Or, contact the manufacturer of your onsite wastewater treatment system and ask them for a listing of approved service providers in your area. System installers may also be able to provide you with potential names. In addition, the National Onsite Wastewater Recycling Association maintains a directory which provides a searchable list by geography of service providers across the country at www.septiclocator.org. Many state health or environment departments also maintain lists of providers in their jurisdiction, and many state associations of onsite wastewater or septic system professionals also maintain a list.

Questions to ask when evaluating service contracts

It is generally a good idea to get multiple proposals so that you can compare not only price, but what is included in the base price of a contract. You should evaluate each contract thoroughly to determine:

- What services are included in the base price?
- What services are available for an additional fee?
- What is the hourly rate for performing additional services?
- When does an additional charge begin to accrue?
- How is the additional service and associated fee approved?
- When is payment due for the services performed?
- What information will you, the homeowner, receive to let you know what base service was performed and when that service occurred?
- How will you know when someone will arrive to conduct the service?
- How should you contact the service provider when an alarm has sounded indicating the need for service? What is the charge for that extra service call?
- How will troubleshooting and subsequent repairs be handled when a system needs extra service?
- What is the homeowner or facility owner's responsibility regarding wastewater loading to the onsite wastewater treatment system?
- What are the homeowner's required activities associated with the operation of the system?

The answers to all these questions are necessary to help you make an informed decision regarding the selection of a service contract and provider. The least expensive base service contract may not be the best deal when evaluating the contracts.

As Benjamin Franklin once said, “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.” The relatively modest cost of ensuring your septic system is properly maintained will not only prevent much more costly repairs, it will ensure that public health, the environment and your property values are protected.

Public Service Announcements (PSAs)

From the state of Washington

- Septic Sam says ‘Save the Date’. SepticSmart Week is September 18th through the 22nd. Each year EPA holds SepticSmart Week with outreach activities to encourage homeowners and communities to care for and maintain their septic systems. You wouldn’t drink out of your toilet would you? That is why information about maintenance and care is so important to help keep our water resources and our environment clean and safe. Septic Sam says call xxx-xxx-xxxx to learn more or go to [insert agency website].
- Septic Sam says ‘Do Your Part, Be SepticSmart’. Learn more about septic system care and maintenance during SepticSmart Week, September 18th through the 22nd. Each year the EPA uses SepticSmart Week to reach out to homeowners and communities, to care for and maintain their septic systems. You wouldn’t drink out of your toilet would you? That’s why information about your septic system is vital in helping to prevent pollution and contamination of our environment and water resources. Call xxx-xxx-xxxx or go to [insert agency website].

Radio Ads

From the state of Alaska

- If you’re buying a home in [insert State] you might be purchasing a septic system as well. Septic systems are effective and easy to maintain, but failing systems are a major cause of water pollution and can be expensive to replace. Learn the warning signs including slowly draining sinks, and toilets, or sewage odors in the house or yard. Better yet, get a professional to inspect your system, determine the age of the system, and make sure that it is properly sized for your current needs. Please check with local authorities for additional requirements in your area. This message is brought to you by [insert agency name].
- Out of sight and out of mind... Does that describe your relationship with your septic system? Proper maintenance of your septic system will affect how well it works, and, how long it lasts. And the most important part of maintenance is a regular inspection. Don’t wait until there’s a problem. Inspections will catch problems before they become serious and expensive to correct. The results can also suggest simple lifestyle changes such as conserving water. That will extend the life of your system. To learn more about your septic system, call your local [insert agency] office and request any materials designed especially for homeowners with septic systems. Protect your property, your family, and the environment, by getting to know your septic system. Please check with local authorities for additional requirements and recommendations in your area. This message is brought to you by [insert agency name].

- If you're like most homeowners, you don't think about what happens to things that go down the drain. But if you have a septic system, those things can come back to haunt you. Several things can damage your septic system and cause unpleasant and expensive problems. Don't use your toilet as a trashcan... unless you want those items back. Call [insert agency name] to learn more about your septic system before it's too late. Protect your property, your family, and your neighbors by getting to know your septic system. This message is brought to you by [insert agency name].

Talking points for MOU Partners

From Michael Preston, NRWA

- "SepticSmart Week is an important event in our community which reminds homeowners to maintain their septic systems. A well-managed septic system protects the health of the homeowner, as well as their neighbors and the community. Those who participate in SepticSmart Week should be commended."
- "SepticSmart Week 2017 is an important step in raising awareness about septic systems and maintenance in our community. This campaign brings community members together and fosters good stewardship. Septic maintenance helps the community avoid costly repairs, maintain home property values, and protect local water sources."
- "SepticSmart Week generates revenue for small businesses - septic installers, manufacturers and service providers. This small business growth supports local economies, jobs and families."
- "[Organization name] is proud to participate in SepticSmart Week 2017. Proper septic maintenance and care is essential to protecting the property, health, and environment of our community(ies). We hope that homeowners take a moment this week to schedule service they may have put off and follow septic maintenance best practices."

Personalize It!

- Some of the brochures and pamphlets on www.epa.gov/septic have white space on the front page to place your business card or a mailing label.
- Use these existing materials and add your own personalized mailing label or company logo.
 - [SepticSmart Week Homeowner's Brochure](#)
 - [SepticSmart Holiday Postcard](#)
 - Look for the "New Homebuyer's Guide to Septic Systems" on the website soon

Track Your Social Media Reach

From Bianca Poll and Dave Clark, RCAP

- Keep track of your social media efforts so you can report out on who you reached. As an MOU partner, it is extremely helpful for all of us to know the extent of our individual and collective efforts to send the SepticSmart message.
- Please use one of these free social media trackers to identify audience, reach, and how well a message is received (examples below). Then you can report back to the other partners with your results!
- Google Analytics
 - Track user activity on your website in real-time, such as: daily site visits, demographics of users, how they reached your site, how long they stay on your site, and which parts of your website are most and least popular.
- Hootsuite
 - Measure social media ROI from all platforms in one place. The free version allows for 1 user and 3 social media platforms). A free 14-day trial for some advanced features is also available.
- Facebook and Twitter Insights
- Metrics:
 - First identify your “Call to Action”. Are you trying to get people to go to your website? Are you trying to get people to share your post?
 - Second, identify the appropriate metric to use based on your call to action:
 - Measuring awareness: how far is your message spreading (volume, reach, exposure, amplification)
 - Measuring engagement: how many people are participating, how often and in what forms are they participating (likes, retweets, comments, replies, and participants)
 - Measuring traffic: are people moving through social media to your external site, and what do they do on your site (track URL shares, clicks, and conversions)
 - Third, analyze the buzz you are creating.
 - Use the tools above or generic tools such as:
 - Social mention: real-time social media search and analysis that tracks user sentiment, top keywords and users, hashtags, and sources of your search word. Type in a word, such as “septic system” to search its mention online

Best Practices, Lessons Learned, Promotional Examples

From Mary Clark, SORA

- Get inspired by some of these examples from a state/community's efforts to advertise and promote SepticSmart Week!
- "Septic Smart Week Events: BRAT did it, so can you!"

Since 2015 the Black River Action Team (BRAT) located in eastern Vermont, along with the Connecticut River Joint Commissions, have sponsored Saturday morning educational workshops in the Springfield Vermont area. Three industry experts from different sectors of the onsite wastewater field presented on important information that homeowners need to know about their onsite wastewater (septic) system. The presenters represented:

- 1) Vermont onsite wastewater permitting regulator spoke about why it is important to have a functioning septic system that is not polluting groundwater or surface waters and that there are new innovative technologies available to help homeowners upgrade their onsite system to today's standards;
- 2) A New Hampshire and Vermont designer, service provider and pumper presented on the basics of how a septic system functions; and
- 3) A regional supplier of onsite wastewater products and equipment presented on the top 10 reasons why a homeowner should maintain their system.

The workshops have been a success, with engaged audiences having the opportunity to ask specific questions about their system. This year's events will be Saturday September 23rd from 9:30 AM to Noon in Claremont, New Hampshire.

- Promotional flyer from VT for free septic system workshop during SepticSmart Week (below).

FREE Septic System Workshop

Date: Sept. 17, 2016
Time: 10:00am - 12:00 noon
 Nolin Murray Center
 St. Mary's Church
 40 Summer Street
 Springfield VT 05156

The workshop is free and open to the public; \$10 donation is appreciated but not required
 RSVP requested but not required
 tara.bamford@crjc.org
 (802) 738-0456

The Do's and Don'ts

- How Septic Systems Work
- Types of Systems
- Protect and Maintain
- Difficult Site Solutions
- Signs of a Failing System

COME WITH QUESTIONS!

Presenters:
 HB Energy Solutions & Septic Services
 SepticPro (GSDIA)
 State of Vermont

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