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Grand Traverse County recognizes SepticSmart Week Sept. 14 – 18

In conjunction with federal, state and local partners, the Grand Traverse County Health Department wants to bring attention to SepticSmart Week, Sept. 14 - 18. The week encourages homeowners and communities to properly maintain their septic systems.

More than 30-thousand homes in Grand Traverse County 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 toxins 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 include:

- **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 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 as the vehicle's weight could damage buried pipes or disrupt underground flow.
- **Pump your Tank:** Routinely pumping your tank can prevent a 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 well water remains free from contaminants.

"Septic system awareness and maintenance are very important to ensure that your system functions properly and does not cause harm to the environment or the public. Your septic system is a piece of critical infrastructure for your home or business which requires care from time to time. Regular maintenance will maximize the life of your system and save you money in the long run," said Dan Thorell, Environmental Health Director, Grand Traverse County Health Department.

For information on Septic Systems, SepticSmart Week or tips on how to properly maintain a septic system, visit Michigan.gov/EGLEOnsiteWastewater.

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