Septic systems: One source of water pollution

Your septic system is your responsibility!
As a homeowner, you are responsible for maintaining your septic system. If your septic system is not working correctly, it could be polluting the water. Be proactive! New technologies can trace pollution right to your door. Check your septic system now to avoid legal trouble later!

What is a Septic System?
Most septic systems have four main parts: a pipe from the home, a septic tank, a drainfield, and the soil.

Why Should I Maintain My Septic System?
• Keep your family and neighbors healthy by preventing the spread of infection and disease.
• It is less expensive to maintain your system than to replace it.
• You can protect the water underground around your home.
• No one wants to drink or swim in your waste!
• It’s your responsibility as a homeowner

Four Things You Can Do to Protect Your Septic System
1. Inspect your system every 3 years and pump your tank as necessary (every 3-5 years)
2. Use water efficiently
3. Don’t throw away hazardous materials in your sinks or toilets
4. Care for your drainfield

Care for Your Drainfield
• Plant only grass on or near your drainfield. The roots from trees and shrubs can clog or damage your drainfield.
• Don’t drive or park vehicles on any part of your drainfield. This can compact the soil and damage your pipes, tank, or other parts of your system.
• Keep surface water and flooding away from your drainfield. Water from roof gutters, basement sump pumps and drainage systems can flood your system and slow it down. It could even cause the waste to back up into your house.

Signs of Septic Failure
• Pooling water or muddy soil around your septic system or in your basement
• Toilets and sinks backing up when you flush or do laundry
• Strips of bright green grass over your drainfield

Causes of Septic Failure
• Household cleaners or other toxins such as oil-based paints, solvents, gasoline, pesticides, antifreeze, etc.
• Avoid anything labeled “Danger” or “Poison” because they are highly hazardous. Look for “Non-toxic” products.
• Hot tubs – your septic system was not designed to handle large quantities of water
• Water purification systems such as water softeners
• Garbage disposals that grind up kitchen scraps and send them into your water

Alternative Systems: You might need an alternative septic system if the soils aren’t suitable for a typical system, if houses are too close together or too close to groundwater or surface water.