

***Threat Activity #2: The establishment, operation, or maintenance of a system that collects, stores, transmits, treats, or disposes of sewage***

**Why are septic systems a threat to drinking water?**

This threat activity includes septic systems, storm water ponds, sewage pipes in the ground, pumping stations and sewage treatment plants.

If a poorly maintained septic system is located close to a drinking water source, it can become a source of pollution for that water source, contaminating the water and causing people to become sick. Within the CTC Source Protection Region, septic systems represent the greatest number of identified significant drinking water threats to municipal systems. Septic systems are located on many properties in a vulnerable areas around municipal wells.

When a septic system is not properly maintained or fails, untreated wastewater can seep directly into the ground and potentially pollute the sources of our drinking water. Bacteria and viruses from human waste that get into drinking water can cause a variety of illnesses.

Many septic systems in a small area can become a major source of pollution. The more polluted the source water, the more costly it is to clean for human consumption.

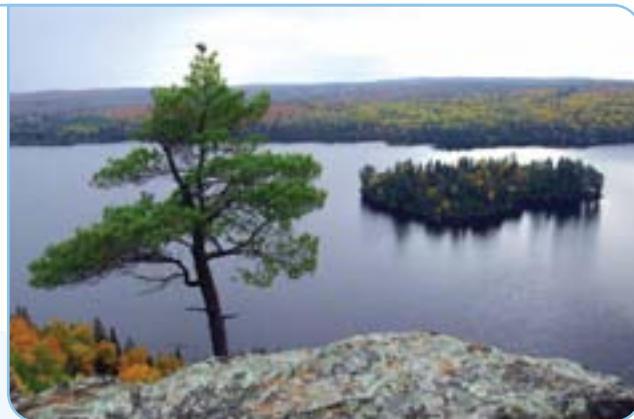
In addition to pollution from pathogens, chemicals in the system such as nitrates and salt are not removed and enter the ground and contaminate drinking water. Other chemicals such as phosphorus can get into surface water and cause too much algal and plant growth. A number of municipal wells in the CTC have been closed and/or the levels of contamination are rising due in part to septic system discharges.

**The good news ...**

If a septic system is properly located, is working properly, and is maintained regularly, it will effectively and efficiently remove disease-causing bacteria. This reduces the threat to the drinking water we all depend on.

**How to keep your system safe**

- Regularly pump and maintain your septic system, no matter what kind of system it is.
- Conserve water in your home or business. Use low flow faucets and toilets, and repair leaks
- Redirect surface water flow away from your system's leach field
- Place a buffer or greenbelt between your leach field and any body of water
- Keep paint, varnish, thinners, oil, pesticides and other hazardous chemicals out of your system
- Reduce water softener usage
- Replace your septic system, if necessary



**Funding to keep your septic safe**

The Ontario Drinking Water Stewardship Program (ODWSP) offers funding for landowners who have been identified as significant threats for septic systems. For further information, and to see if you are eligible, please contact Joanne Jeffery at 416-661-6600 or [jjeffery@trca.on.ca](mailto:jjeffery@trca.on.ca)