



Inaugural Edition of “Q”

Welcome to “Q”! Q is the variable for flowrate. This newsletter is designed to provide helpful information, news, and highlight upcoming events in the Wastewater Engineering Support and Plan Review Section. We will highlight common concerns and scenarios and provide tips and suggestions of how to best handle them.

Stay Informed Effortlessly

We created an e-mail listserver so anyone can get updates and messages regarding wastewater engineering and plan review topics delivered directly to their inbox. Visit our listserver sign-up page at: <http://list.state.ak.us/soalists/dec.wastewater.systems/jl.htm>

Our listserver is configured so you can also respond to each and every e-mail with comments, questions or concerns. The entire listserver community can see all comments, so your question could be the one to spark interest and other questions.

Check our Website Regularly

We strive to keep our website current and helpful. Our staff are busy creating helpful guides and aids and revising how we interact with our stakeholders. Visit our site at: <http://dec.alaska.gov/water/wwdp/onsite/index.htm> or scan our QR code!

*“Life is like a sewer:
what you get out of it
depends on what you
put into it”*

- Tom Lehrer



John M. Asplund Wastewater Treatment Facility—Anchorage, AK

In This Issue

- Welcome to Q
- Septic System Life Expectancy
- Change of Legal Description
- Engineer and Designer’s Webinar
- Searching for Wastewater Docs



Don't let this happen to you!

Change of Legal Description

The Department files all wastewater system records according to the legal description of the structure it serves. For homes, this is typically the subdivision, lot and block, or perhaps a survey and tract. Often properties are further subdivided and the structure's legal description changes. This can cause a mismatch between the structure's current legal description and the legal description the structure's wastewater documents were filed under.

In the past, the Department required an engineer to evaluate the system and file a report requesting a new legal description and asserting the system was still protective of public health.

Effective April 1, 2016 the Department will offer the legal owner of a structure the option to submit a legal description change form. The Department will take the owner's self-certification and file the wastewater documents under the new legal description the owner requests. This form will allow owners to modify their legal descriptions in a simple and timely manner.

Septic System Life Expectancy

The Department is often asked how long septic systems should last. It is not an easy question for the same reason asking how long a car should last is hard to answer. The life expectancy depends on how the system is maintained and used, what it is built out of, and the conditions at the site.

Extending system life with maintenance

Maintaining septic systems extends system life. The Department recommends pumping septic tanks every other year. Our cold temperatures do not promote good digestion of solids in septic tanks and frequent pumping keeps systems running smoothly. Also, keep monitoring tubes and inspection ports clear and well sealed. Make sure lids and covers are bolted down or locked to prevent accidents.

Use systems wisely

A conservative approach to water use will extend system life. Any water treatment system backwash (such as water softeners) going to your septic system can reduce life expectancy. The use of garbage disposals, excessive cleaning chemicals, fabric softeners and antibacterial soaps can all have adverse impacts on the life of septic systems.

Site Conditions

Wet, acidic soils reduce the life of steel septic tanks. Expect steel septic tanks to last 15-20 years. Generally, the more fine grained and wet the soil, the more critical it becomes to perform routine maintenance and use the system wisely. Additionally, surrounding ornamental trees can penetrate system joints and displace the system pipes causing poor system performance or failures

For further tips and ideas, see the full article at: http://www.inspectapedia.com/septic/Septic_System_Life.php



Wastewater Engineering and System Designer Webinar

The Wastewater Engineering Support and Plan Review Section is hosting a meeting with webinar and teleconference support targeted towards wastewater engineers and system designers.

The offices in Anchorage, Fairbanks, Juneau, Soldotna, and Wasilla will each open their conference room on May 2, 2016 from 1:30-3:00pm so you can attend in person. We will also host the meeting live on Skype and on teleconference so you can attend from anywhere.

We will be discussing upcoming changes in practices such as engineering plan review waivers, guidelines for electronic plan submittals and residential marine outfalls.

Most importantly, we want your feedback! We'll have plenty of time in the agenda to answer your questions and tell us what changes you'd like to see and how we can help you better protect public health in Alaska.

A formal invitation will arrive in March, but save the date!



Searching for Wastewater System Documents

During a property sale, a lender may require documents which indicate the wastewater system has the approval of the jurisdiction having authority. Since 1998, the Department has mandated that system documents be submitted to the Department for filing. For single-family and duplex homes, these files are found in the on-line Septic Tracking System or SEPTS. Visit SEPTS at: <http://dec.alaska.gov/Applications/Water/Septs/>

SEPTS retrieves documents by the legal description of the property, which does not include the mailing address. Normally, this is the subdivision, lot, and block.

Prior to 1998, the Department would file documents for property owners as an option, but homeowners were not required to file documents with the Department. If a system was installed prior to 1998, the Department may have no record of the wastewater system.

To create a record where none exists, the property owner can enlist the help of a professional engineer licensed by the State of Alaska. The engineer will evaluate the system and submit documents to the Department for processing. The Department will document the system based on the professional assertions of the submitting engineer.

If you have questions, contact the closest Department office for additional details. Local office contact information is available at: <http://dec.alaska.gov/water/wwdp/onsite/areaOffices.html>