



February 2010

Illicit Discharges Gone Wild



Thank you to Kelvin Jackson (PC Mosquito Control) and Gary Halstead (PC Public Works) for reporting illicit discharges.



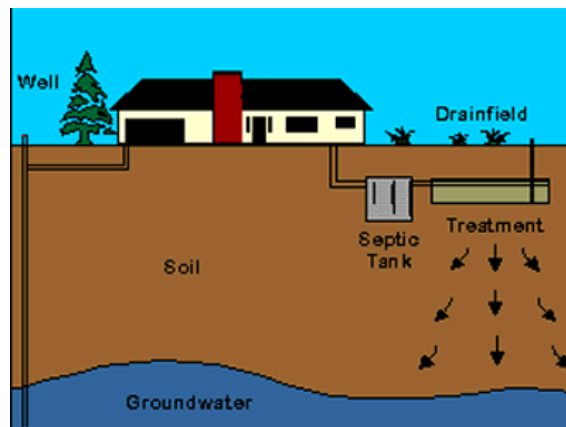
Kelvin Jackson - PC Mosquito Control / Vegetation debris



Gary Halstead - PC Public Works / Pool marcite in curb gutter

SEPTIC SYSTEMS & ILLICIT DISCHARGES

In many areas of Pinellas County wastewater produced in the home is treated in a septic system located in the yard. The main concern about septic systems in relation to illicit discharges is systems which no longer function properly and allow pollutants such as nitrogen, bacteria, and viruses to spill into our waterways. It has been documented that even properly operating septic systems which are now in use in Florida soils do not protect surface waters.



WHY SEPTIC SYSTEMS FAIL

- ▶ Excess water use that overloads the system.
- ▶ Grease and fibrous material buildup in the septic system.
- ▶ Improper or non-existent inspection and maintenance.

THINGS FIELD PERSONNEL MAY NOTICE WHICH COULD INDICATE A POSSIBLE SEPTIC SYSTEM DISCHARGE (AND WHICH YOU COULD REPORT)

Illicit discharges associated with failed septic systems may be difficult to visually identify but here are some of the warning signs:

- ▶ Mysterious pipes coming off of a property or which are directed into a stormwater structure. Sometimes when a septic system fails property owners will re-route discharges (such as laundry machine discharges) offsite into waterbodies or into the storm water system.



- ▶ Mushy foul smelling ground underfoot in a yard even during the dry season. In some cases, the failed septic system will ooze out over the ground, into the right-of-way or adjacent storm drain system.



- ▶ Offensive odors outdoors or indoors particularly when noted with above items.

- ▶ Grass in a yard growing faster and greener in one particular area. While this is common with septic systems, when noted together with the items above, it is a good sign that a septic system is failing.

THINGS TO KNOW IF YOU OWN A SEPTIC SYSTEM

The Florida Septic Tank Association has the following recommendations for homeowners using septic systems:

- ▶ A septic tank should be opened and inspected every two to three years by a septic tank contractor, who will determine whether it needs to be pumped out.

- ▶ Do not plant trees or shrubbery over a septic tank or drain field. Roots can choke the drain field, reduce the tank's capacity or block the tank's inlet or outlet.
- ▶ Do not place grease or fibrous products, such as fruit peelings, in the garbage disposal. Replacement is the only remedy for a clogged drain field. It cannot be repaired by cleaning or the infusion of enzymes.
- ▶ Do not add yeast or bacteria to your septic tank.
- ▶ Avoid overtaxing your septic system by spacing laundry loads throughout the week rather than several loads on just one or two days.

Contact Information for possible illicit discharges (727) 464-4425:

Chip Heintz, cheintz@pinellascounty.org
Bill Sova, wsova@pinellascounty.org
Stormwater 24-Hour Watchline (727) 464-5060
Complaints received from incorporated (city) jurisdictions will be forwarded.

See this webpage for more information on septic systems:
http://www.epa.gov/owm/septic/pubs/homeowner_guide_long.pdf

See this webpage connection for this Pinellas County Health Department
<http://www.pinellashealth.com>

For more information on stormwater and Pinellas County water quality visit the water atlas
www.pinellas.wateratlas.usf.edu/stormwaterEd/

Illicit Discharge Training Video:
<http://vstreamint.co.pinellas.fl.us:8080/ramgen/illegaldischarges.rm>