

# WATER - our MOUNTAIN GOLD



Suggestions from the  
Central Sierra Watershed Committee

## ***SEPTIC SYSTEMS***


### ***What you don't know can hurt you!***

Most homeowners probably never give much thought to what goes down their drain. But if you rely on a septic system to treat and dispose of your household wastewater, what you don't know can hurt you, your property, and your surrounding environment.


#### ***PROBLEM***


 Failing septic systems may:


- Result in the release of raw sewage into the environment, which will affect water quality within surrounding water bodies and impact drinking water supplies in nearby water wells.
- Result in expensive repairs.
- Harm property values throughout your neighborhood.


 Surfacing sewage may expose your family and pets to disease causing bacteria and viruses.


#### ***TREATMENT***


 Never dispose of paints, varnishes, thinners, waste oils, pesticides, or other hazardous chemicals in your septic system.


 Avoid disposal of coffee grinds, diapers, kitty litter, sanitary napkins, grease, paper towels and other household items in your septic system.

 Fix leaky faucets and running toilets, and use washing machines and dishwashers only when full. This will prevent saturation of the soil in the drainfield, which can affect the quality of the soil and its ability to naturally remove toxins, bacteria, viruses, and other pollutants from the wastewater.

 Annually inspect your septic system to ensure that it is 1) working properly and 2) to determine when the tank should be pumped. If your septic system utilizes a dual disposal field, it is recommended that you switch leach lines when the clocks change.

 Pumping your tank depends on the tank size, number of people living in your home, and habits of your particular household. The general recommendation is between 3 to 5 years.

 Maintain and repair your septic system if it is defective, leaking or experiencing problems. Contact your Environmental Health Department prior to beginning repair or replacement work.

 Obtain a homeowners guide from the National Small Flows Clearinghouse at (800) 624-8301 - request the Fall 1995 issue "Septic Tanks Operation and Maintenance" Pipeline Item #SFPLN03 or on the Internet at <http://www.nesc.wvu.edu/nsfc/plarchiveframe.html>.

#### ***RECOMMENDATION:***

*Avoid commercial septic tank cleaners and additives. According to the National Small Flows Clearinghouse "There are many products on the market that claim to help septic systems work better; the truth is there is no magic potion, in fact most engineers and sanitation professionals*

*believe that commercial septic system additives are, at best, useless, and at worst, potentially harmful to a system.”*

The CSWC meets on the last Wednesday of every month at the Sierra Ambulance Office, 40755 Winding Way, Oakhurst, at 9 AM, and is open to the public. For information, please email [leavesofgrass@netptc.net](mailto:leavesofgrass@netptc.net)

***The mission of the Central Sierra Watershed Committee is to promote the quality, quantity, and aesthetic values of our water resources through the conservation and restoration of our watersheds.***

CSWC members include: Interested citizens, ranchers, homeowners; local Native American tribes; North Fork Community Development Council; Chowchilla-Redtop and Coarsegold Resource Conservation Districts; Chowchilla City Council; Upper Merced River Watershed Council; California Water Institute; Sierra Foothill Conservancy; Madera Irrigation District; Yosemite/Sequoia Resource Conservation & Development Council; US Army Corps of Engineers; Regional Water Quality Control Board; Madera County Environmental Health & Engineering; CA Department of Water Resources; Madera County Board of Supervisors; Madera Agriculture Commissioner; San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District; Natural Resource Conservation Service; and the United States Forest Service.

*Note: The contents of this article do not necessarily reflect the views of the State.*