

## ACTION ITEM 8.2 – SEPTIC SYSTEM CRITICAL AREA MANAGEMENT

### ACTION ITEM

Identify septic system critical areas, both existing problem areas and potential problem areas, and assign additional management requirements for septic systems in those areas.

### OBJECTIVE

Limit the potential negative impact of failing septic systems in areas that are considered sensitive or problematic.

### DESCRIPTION OF MEASURE

Critical areas are those areas where the risks and/or potential impacts of septic system failures are higher and areas where failure could readily impact a drinking water supply source. Each local government must identify critical areas that have experienced problems or could possibly experience failures in the future. In determining critical areas for septic systems, the following areas should be considered:

- Septic systems in small drinking water supply watersheds
- Septic systems found around lakes or other water features
- Areas with high failure rates
- Areas with limited soil conditions, rock, steep slopes, or high groundwater levels
- Other problem areas as defined by County Board of Health or local jurisdictions

The local wastewater providers and County Boards of Health are encouraged to participate in local government efforts to identify critical areas. Local wastewater providers may choose to extend sanitary sewer service to some critical areas that are adjacent to current or planned service areas. Local water providers are encouraged to participate in the identification of critical areas, especially if there is the potential to impact drinking water supplies.

Once the critical areas are identified, local governments must determine what additional management options apply to septic systems within these critical areas. Additional management options for consideration are outlined for both existing and new septic systems in critical areas as shown in Table 8-1. Management options may vary within a jurisdiction based on the critical area being protected. For example, critical areas with bedrock or poor soils may require larger minimum lot sizes for septic systems, but critical areas associated with a drinking water supply watershed may require inspections/maintenance of septic systems every 5 years.

#### Responsible Party

- Local Government
- Local Wastewater Provider
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

#### In Coordination With

- Site Plan Review Staff
- Community Development/ Zoning
- Local Stormwater Program
- Local Water Provider
- Local Wastewater Providers
- County Board of Health
- Other: neighboring local governments and wastewater providers (where appropriate)

## Section 8: SEPTIC SYSTEMS AND DECENTRALIZED SYSTEMS

**TABLE 8-1**  
**Management Options Matrix for Critical Areas**

Management Option	New Septic Systems	Existing Septic Systems
Require connection to sanitary sewer when system fails (if available).		X
If sanitary sewer is not available when system fails, then require repairs to be made using current regulations including a soils test to determine the best type of system for the site.		X
Require larger minimum lot size (based on site criteria).	X	
Increase tank size by 50% and increase drain field length.	X	
Track location of septic system in database.	X	X
Require Health Department to be involved in initial site plan review for new developments (before roads and lots are cut).	X	
Make critical areas a priority for sewer service in local wastewater management plans.	X	X
Require inspection and/or maintenance at 5 year intervals.	X	X
Institute or enhance water quality monitoring.	X	X
Require 2 full-size drain fields with a switching valve be installed and alternate flow annually to extend the life of the drain fields.	X	
Special homeowner education program.	X	X

### SPECIFIC SUB-TASKS

Sub-Task	Description
Identify critical areas.	Identify critical areas with risk and/or potential impacts for septic system failures.
Conduct additional management of septic systems in those critical areas.	Determine the appropriate conditions for septic systems in certain critical areas.