



gwinnettcounty

Department of **Water Resources**

Has Your Tank Been Pumped Lately?

Maintaining a septic tank is a process that is often overlooked or forgotten by homeowners. Many think, "I've never had a problem, so I've never gotten the tank pumped." This makes sense until you learn that maintaining a septic system is a preventive action. Waiting for a septic failure can often mean it is too late to prevent long-term problems with the entire system, which can be quite costly to repair or replace.

So, what happens when your septic system fails? A failing septic system can overflow into your yard, which can allow raw sewage to flow to a creek or storm drain. A failing septic system can also cause a backup of sewage into your house. These impacts occur due a blockage of solids either in the septic tank itself or in the drain field lines. This blockage prevents the system from functioning properly, which keeps the wastewater from our homes from spreading out through the drain field and soaking in underground. The water has to go somewhere and it is never someplace where we want it to go!

The city of Grayson sits at the top of a hill and drains to four waterways in Gwinnett County: Big Haynes Creek, Brushy Fork Creek, Tribble Creek, and Bay Creek. Leaking septic systems can be one of the underlining sources of fecal coliform bacteria found in Gwinnett streams. Although fecal coliform will not cause you to become sick, its presence is an indication of fecal contamination in the streams, which can mean that disease-causing bacteria may be present as well. Proper maintenance of your septic system can prevent septic failures and thus prevent this type of pollution in our waterways.

Getting your septic system pumped every 3-5 years is the most efficient way to avoid septic system failures. In addition to proper maintenance, limiting the amount of solids and FOG (fats, oils, and grease) that are added to your tank can help prevent clogging and reduce system failure. Use household cleaning chemicals as directed and at low frequency. These cleaners can kill the good bacteria in your septic tank that are vital to help the system operate properly.

Remember, your toilets are not trash cans! For more information, visit www.gwinnettH2O.com, click on Stormwater Management and scroll to the bottom for a link to septic tank maintenance information.

