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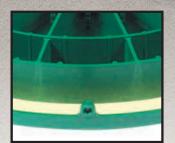
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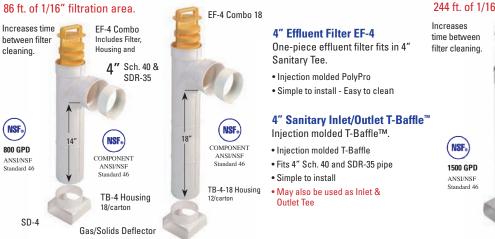


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INSTALLER PROFILE:

Extra Special Care By Ted J. Rulseh

ON THE COVER:

Pennsylvania's Delaware Valley Septic, Sewer & Storm specializes in building and maintaining septic system for estate homes. Owners David DiGregorio, left, and T.J. Dell'Arciprete are shown at the company headquarters with a 2017 Mercedes-Benz Sprinter 3500 service van with Kargo Master upfit and a 2007 Mack vacuum truck with a Presvac Systems tank and National Vacuum Equipment blower. (Photo by Kevin Blackburn)

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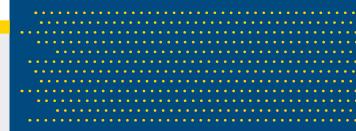
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Enjoy this issue!

Established in 2004, Onsite Installer[™] fosters higher professionalism and profitability for those who design and install septic systems and other onsite wastewater treatment systems.

Jim Kneiszel

An Arizona Onsite Professional and Realtor Find Common Ground

When Doug Disbrow and Susan Keown teamed up to promote septic system upgrades, homeowners and the environment were the big winners

istorically it seems like septic system installers and maintainers have been at odds with the real estate sales community. Whenever a state onsite trade association supports legislation to monitor and maintain septic systems, invariably a Realtors' association steps in and tries to squash the effort to deal with environmental issues.

The real estate community circles the wagons and cries "big government" or "property owners' rights" to push back on regulations they perceive will slow the sale process. They argue that addressing failed or failing onsite systems will cost the home seller and homebuyer too much money and are an unnecessary intrusion when their customers are already dealing with big down payments and mortgages.

I know why they fight inspections and regulations. Follow the money straight to their commission checks. But isn't it the job of real estate agents to look out for the best interests of their clients? Don't they realize it's better to uncover a septic system issue at the time of sale rather than a few months later after the new owners have moved in? Negotiations between buyers and sellers turn into battles after the deal is done and one party or the other feels wronged. This is when the war can move to the courtroom.

I've seen the tension between onsite and real estate professionals play out many times over the years as states and counties consider time-of-sale inspections or required maintenance and pumping intervals.

So I was surprised and pleased to learn about an onsite system designer/inspector and a Realtor teaming up in Gila County, Arizona, (northwest of Phoenix in the Tonto National Forest) to educate homeowners about the importance of repairing onsite systems for the sake of improved water quality and the environment in general. The pair has worked together for a decade to fix many onsite systems along a creek system, resulting in the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency delisting the waterways for nitrogen pollution.

GOLDEN SEPTIC TANK AWARD

Congratulations go out to Doug Disbrow, owner of AZ Wastewater Services, and Susan Keown, of ERA Young Realty & Investment in Payson. Their efforts to help homeowners and improve the Christopher Creek and Tonto Creek watershed recently won them the Golden Septic Tank Award from the Arizona Onsite Wastewater Recycling Association.

"They've really done a marvelous job," says Jake Garrett, manager of the wastewater division for Gila County, who has worked with them every step of the way. "They are a team and decided, 'We have a problem and we



A Kathy Mills, P.E., on the left, president of the Arizona Onsite Wastewater Recycling Association, presents the Golden Septic Tank Award to Doug Disbrow and Susan Keown. (Photo courtesy of AzOWRA)

need to clean up our waters. During transfer inspections, we need to push everyone as far as we can to fix their systems.' They used their personal persuasion powers and pushed to make this happen."

Garrett says Disbrow and Keown were inspired to take action after attending a semester-long Master Watershed Steward class conducted by the University of Arizona Cooperative Extension service. They wanted to improve implementation of time-of-sale inspection regulations after tests showed excessive nitrogen levels in the creeks. Over the years, they have convinced an estimated 30-40 homeowners to correct problems and replace systems, which brought nitrogen levels low enough to remove one impaired waterway designation.

Garrett says recent tests showed a total maximum daily load of nitrogen at less than 0.5 ppm in the creeks. By comparison, drinking water standards are 10 ppm, he says.

"This is one of the most exciting things I've seen happen in a long time, where something they did produced a result that you can see," Garrett says. He says the changes were made "with no funding purely on the initiative of people and the willingness of private parties to do what's right. They knew they had a problem and this makes a big contribution toward cleaning up an environmental problem we all have."

EDUCATION IS KEY

Consumer education opportunities have played a major role in acceptance of repairing and replacing polluting onsite systems, Disbrow says. Another factor is how much system inspectors have stepped up their game in the years since more thorough time-of-sale inspection rules went into effect in 2006, he explains.

Disbrow and Keown filled their schedules with as many speaking engagements as possible, from talking to realty groups and homeowner's associations to meeting regularly with students in grades four through eight during STEMFest events (science, technology, engineering and math) at area schools. The latter teaching moments have given positive exposure to the onsite industry and addressed clean-water issues important to everyone in the community, he says.

"This has helped develop an awareness about wastewater and the recycling process, and it just snowballs and snowballs and snowballs. In four hours' time, I'm talking to 150 students on an almost one-to-one basis and their parents," Disbrow says.

"I have found the average homeowner is afraid of the county when it comes to their wastewater system. They have the idea that if I let the county know they have a problem, they're going to make them put in a \$40,000 system when 95 percent of the time we can fix what they've got for \$2,000 to \$6,000," he continues. "They're never educated on basic maintenance, and once they get over the fear and false information, then we can open up a dialogue."

Work with inspectors in the county has also helped. Over the past decade, inspectors have become more thorough and are uncovering issues earlier in the transfer process, building confidence from buyers and sellers.

"The majority of inspectors in this county have stepped up their game," he says. Before the days of more enlightened real estate agents, careful inspections weren't encouraged. "The average homeowner is afraid of the county when it comes to their wastewater system. They have the idea that if I let the county know they have a problem, they're going to make them put in a \$40,000 system when 95 percent of the time we can fix what they've got for \$2,000 to \$6,000." Doug Disbrow



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EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

"They called it a tank certification inspection. Pump it, fill out the paperwork and away they go. They never looked at the piping, the leach lines. So many times a new owner would be in the house for a month and he had flushing issues," Disbrow says.

Today inspectors have better training and equipment to get the job done. Most have cameras and they scour systems looking for potential problems, he says. And the inspectors have developed good relationships with most Realtors, who now understand the importance of addressing onsite problems before home sales close, he adds.

"The smart Realtors like (Keown) have been around and understand the septic systems and are good advocates," he says.

THE COMMON GOOD

Four generations of Keown's family have waded in the waters of Christopher Creek, and she has strong feelings about protecting water quality for generations to come. During 43 years in the real estate industry, she's learned the importance of stressing clean water. And functioning septic systems are a big part of preserving the well water residents drink and the rushing waters in the creeks.

Most of the private wastewater systems in the area were built in the 1950s through 1970s and they're failing with greater regularity, Keown explains. Some home still use steel septic tanks or cesspools, and repairs and replacements have made a big difference. When people understand the risk of ignoring these problems, they open the pocketbook, she explains.

"The real key is educating people about what's underground," she says. "I'm seeing a change in our area because of the education. Nobody wants to pollute their well, their only source of drinking water." She says it helps that in Arizona "water is more valuable than gold." All of that is part of the reason she can't remember a single homeowner who's been unwilling to repair a system once they are educated.

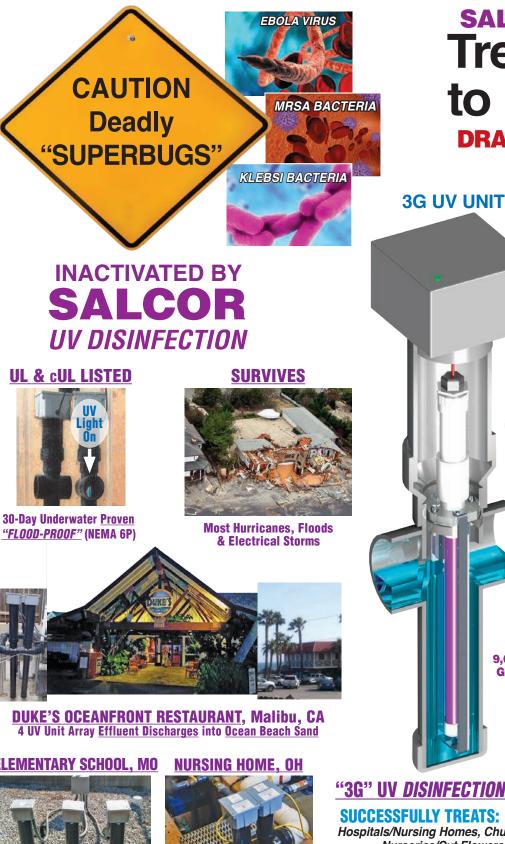
Keown says she's always impressed with Disbrow's ability to connect with homeowners, and she appreciates the efforts of the Arizona Onsite Wastewater Recycling Association to provide up-to-date training for the onsite industry. For her part, she likes to observe inspections for customers she represents and continues to learn about wastewater. On top of timeof-sale inspections, she also favors moves to require routine maintenance of systems.

"Doug has really raised the bar of all the inspectors here. They do a lot of training and all of the inspectors now have trackhoes and cameras and they're checking the tanks for watertightness. They're all doing really good inspections now, and it wasn't always that way," she says.

SPREAD THE WORD

I hope this cooperative effort involving a Realtor, a system designer, inspectors, county government and a state trade association is repeated across the country in coming years. I am tired of reading headlines about real estate agents and onsite contractors working at cross purposes over an environmental issue that affects everyone. We need to rally around the cause of modernizing our decentralized wastewater infrastructure for the good of homeowners, the onsite industry and the environment.

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INSTALLATION TIPS

Accessible Clean-Outs

Easily accessible clean-outs are an important part of onsite system operation and maintenance. Installing a clean-out at the wall outside the home or business is a good idea if the system ever needs to be jetted or cleaned. The clean-out allows all this work to be done outdoors, so any mess stays outside. Read these tips for installing accessible clean-outs. onsiteinstaller.com/featured





LEAVE NO TRACE **Excavating in**

Tight Spaces

When working on properties with extensive landscaping, pools and other high-value amenities, it's important to cause as little disturbance as possible. Dave DiGregorio of Delaware Valley Septic, featured in this month's issue, knows this all too well. In this exclusive online article, DiGregorio discusses his favorite excavators that get the job done in those delicate spaces. onsiteinstaller.com/ featured

Overheard Online

"Change occurs over time and rarely happens all at once, so create steps to follow that take you down the path of growth you've established."

- 6 Steps for Growing Your Onsite Business onsiteinstaller.com/featured

DAILY GRIND How to Fight Burnout

Being a septic services professional can be a thankless job. You're often called upon in emergencies when people aren't in the best of spirits, and you aren't always shown the level of respect you deserve. Has that daily grind killed some of the passion you had when you first got started in the industry? Try these tactics to get re-energized.

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Delaware Valley Septic, Sewer & Storm takes measures to install quality systems with minimal site disturbance for high-value homes in southeast Pennsylvania

By Ted J. Rulseh

or Delaware Valley Septic, Sewer & Storm, a typical onsite system installation serves a home with five to eight bedrooms, plus ancillary structures, often with a pool and tennis court, usually with elaborate and costly landscaping.

That means large systems, of course, but also meticulous care for the properties. High-income customers expect quality work, and that includes as little disturbance to sites as possible.

"We are in a very affluent area where people expect the best service and perfect landscaping after installation and repair work," says T.J. Dell'Arciprete, equal partner in the business with brother-in-law David DiGregorio.

The Delaware Valley Septic, Sewer & Storm crew includes, from left, David DiGregorio, Rafael Barillas Anaya, Jim Softchin, Eliud Barillas Anaya, Nestor Barillas Anaya, Korey Cook, Mike Springer and T.J. Dell'Arciprete. (Photo by Kevin Blackburn)

>> Eliud Barillas Anaya rakes out a subsurface bed consisting of 2 feet of sand and 1 foot of crushed stone and perforated pipe. The excavator is a Komatsu PC35. (Photo courtesy of Delaware Valley Septic, Sewer & Storm)

"They're looking for top-notch service for the most cost-effective price."

The two bought the business in 2014 from David DiGregorio's father, Ron DiGregorio, but they've actually operated it since 2005. Besides installations, the company does brisk business in system inspections, tank pumping, pipe inspection, waterjetting and stormwater basin testing and construction.

Working out of Springfield, Pennsylvania, near Philadelphia and serving Chester, Montgomery and Delaware counties, the company has expanded rapidly. It tripled in size from 2005 to 2014 and since then has seen 20 percent growth per year. The partners expect that to continue in 2019.

GREAT EXPECTATIONS

Delaware Valley serves an area known for excellence in education: It is home to prestigious private K-12 schools and universities, and its public school systems rank among the best in the United States. Homes worth a million dollars and much more are common, and many are Delaware Valley customers for replacement septic systems or stormwater retention basins.

Serving those customers takes an exceptional level of care. Dell'Arciprete observes, "When we do an install, we're back

at people's houses, touching things up, filling in soil when excavations settle or getting grass professionals in to treat the final landscapes. We do whatever is necessary to make sure the product on top of the ground is just as satisfactory as what's under the ground."

About 75 percent of the company's installs are replacement systems. That often means working in tight quarters, avoiding sprinkler systems, dog fencing, botanical beds and much more. "We want our clients disturbed as little as possible," Dell'Arciprete says. "Sometimes we use track matting. When we do deep holes, we put all the soil on a mat and then put it back.

"Most times, clients don't realize how invasive installation and repair work will actually be. Seeing a design on paper is a lot different than the reality of having your property damaged by all the earth-moving work required to complete a job. We tell our clients their property will look like a bomb hit it for about a week, but then it will all be restored the following week."





Delaware Valley Septic, Sewer & Storm, Springfield, Pennsylvania

Owners:	T.J. Dell'Arciprete and David DiGregorio
Founded:	1986
Employees:	10
Service area:	Chester, Montgomery and Delaware counties
Specialties:	Conventional and advanced onsite systems
Affiliations:	Pennsylvania Septage Management Association
Website:	www.delvalseptics.com

Mike Springer, left, and Jim Softchin use an Extreme tripod to hoist a pump from Sulzer Pumps Solutions out of a commercial pump station at a health care facility. Two pumps came out for inspection; one was burned out due to clogging with wipes. (Photo by Kevin Blackburn)

David DiGregorio uses a Komatsu excavator for some site preparation work. The company's high-end customers demand a clean work site and minimal landscape disturbance, so mats from AlturnaMATS by Checkers Industrial Safety Products were placed to hold the spoils. (Photo by Kevin Blackburn) David DiGregorio recalls an installation that represents the kind of challenges the company faces. "The home was on a huge hill and they had a system that had been surfacing for months," he says. "Another contractor had been hired to provide a solution. They proposed a drip system with two zones in front and two zones on the side.

"We were hired as a consultant. We proposed putting everything upgradient. We changed the design and did new soil morphology. We designed a system that put everything in one spot." The four-zone drip system included 3,500 linear feet of drip tubing, installed on a steep slope.

"The tubing installation took three days. Because of shallow rock, a lot of the work had to be done by hand. They had a huge swimming pool and probably a half-million-dollar landscaping bed. We had a small area to get into with our delivery lines and a small area to drop in our tanks.

"As soon as the install was done, the client wanted everything sodded immediately. We ordered in 6,000 square feet of sod. The amazing part was that after three weeks of challenging work, when we were done, it looked like we had never been on the property."

"We are in a very affluent area where people expect the best service and perfect landscaping after installation and repair work." T.J. Dell'Arciprete

SUPERSIZED SYSTEMS

Sensitivity to owners' properties isn't the only challenge of building systems for large homes. The systems themselves need to be much larger than for the typical rural or suburban dwelling. Health Department regulations call for sizing systems based on the number of bedrooms. For Delaware Valley that means installing 1,200- to 1,600-square-foot drainfields for five- to eight-bedroom estates.

In addition, Dell'Arciprete says, "Every time they have a separate dwelling that could be used as an apartment, we have to count that as another threebedroom structure. Many of our clients have au pair suites, in-law quarters, pool houses with apartments on the top and garages with offices on top. If it's separated from the home, it requires the three-bedroom minimum.

"We can tie them all into the same system, but the square footage of the drainfield and the size of the septic tank have to be increased accordingly." The typical installation includes two 1,000-gallon precast concrete septic tanks in series; some systems have three tanks, when pumps are required.

BEST FRIENDS FIRST

Ron DiGregorio founded Delaware Valley Septic, Sewer & Storm in 1986. It is still very much in the family. DiGregorio's son David DiGregorio bought the business in 2014 with T.J. Dell'Arciprete.

Best friends since high school, DiGregorio and Dell'Arciprete worked for the company during summers. DiGregorio left to earn a degree in hotel and restaurant management from Penn State University and took a job in a commercial kitchen. Dell'Arciprete studied at what he calls "the school of hard knocks" and built a career in telecommunications sales.

"In 2005 my dad developed a brain tumor," DiGregorio recalls. "When my dad got sick, we both quit our jobs and came back to help out."

Dell'Arciprete adds, "It's the nature of what families do. Families step in and just get it done. I've known David since I was 16. I married his sister, and I love his family so much. We're best friends first, brothers-in-law second and business partners third." Both are state-certified as Sewage Enforcement Officers.

With DiGregorio's knowledge of the business built on lessons from his father and Dell'Arciprete's sales training and experience, the two took off on a fast growth trajectory. "We're both good with people," Dell'Arciprete says. "We're hospitable. We want to do what's best for our clients and our company — we've always thought and felt that way.

"David and I have a dynamic relationship. It basically can't be broken. I trust him implicitly, he trusts me implicitly and it works. We have different personalities, and that works, too. Some customers want to deal with me; I'm a more aggressive personality. Some like to deal with David because he's more, 'I'll take care of you.' It's a good fit all the way around."

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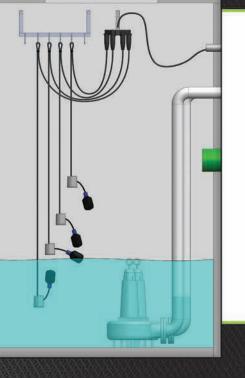


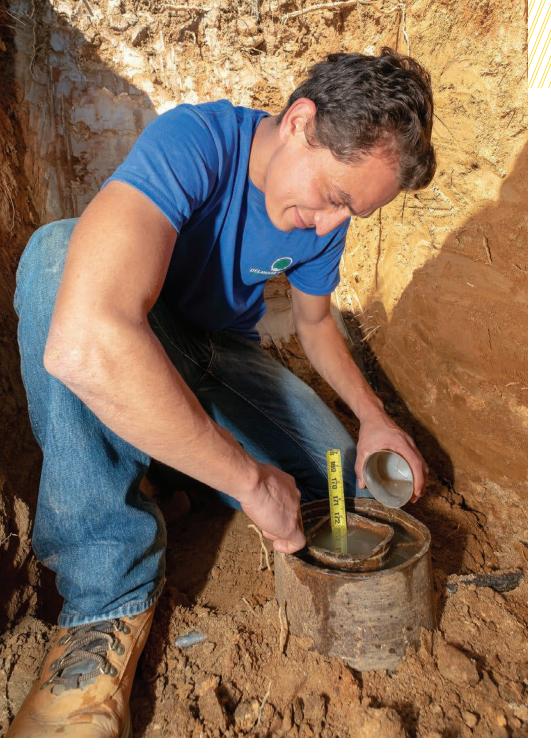
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Nestor Barillas Anaya performs a perc test at a system installation site. (Photo by Kevin Blackburn)

"We used to run everything with backhoes. But with the excavators, it's much easier to work in tighter spaces." David DiGregorio

Delaware Valley installs about half conventional and half advanced treatment systems. For aerobic treatment units, the company relies on Jet Inc. systems. Other advanced systems use prefabricated geotextile sand filters (Eljen), designed to provide passive advanced treatment for residential and commercial applications.

"We've also installed quite a few Ecoflo Coco peat filters (Premier Tech Aqua) recently for absorption area reductions and at-grade system requirements," Dell'Arciprete says. "They are great because now the tanks come with the media already installed and the pumps are inside the component, eliminating the need for another tank and lift pump."

INTO THE FIELD

In day-to-day life, DiGregorio spends much of his time interacting with customers on site, while Dell'Arciprete handles the office with wife and office manager Rachel. Two-person teams go on inspections; up to three installation crews can be at work at any given time.

The Delaware Valley team includes Jim Softchin and Rafael Barillas Anaya, field supervisors; Eliud Barillas Anaya, Mike Springer and Nestor Barillas Anaya, laborers; and Korey Cook, pump truck operator.

A TOUCH OF TECHNOLOGY

Wi-Fi in septic systems? It's a coming thing for certain affluent customers of Delaware Valley Septic, Sewer & Storm. Some customers have septic tanks with alarms that are being triggered because of rainfall infiltration; others are on holding tanks that need regular and frequent pumping.

"We're installing Wi-Fi and Mi-Fi connections and using their routers to email us when there is an alarm condition," says partner David DiGregorio. "The alarms are silenced. When the alarm is triggered, we receive an email and send the pump truck without any phone calls or other interactions.

"We're going to put them in wherever we have clients who are struggling with failing systems. We have an area near us that is being converted to sewer, and about 1,000 homeowners are waiting for the sewer line to come in. Some are in dire distress situations where we pump every other week. We're going to put the Wi-Fi connections in wherever someone needs to get pumped before the liquid rises to the level of the sewer line and causes a backup."



The company added a septic pumping truck in 2014 for greater scheduling convenience, and now the truck is used to pump 1,200 tanks per year. Mike Springer and Korey Cook are shown pulling hoses from the 2007 Mack, built out by Presvac Systems and running a National Vacuum Equipment blower. (Photo by Kevin Blackburn)

The company owns two equipment trailers (Towmaster and Bri-Mar), a dump truck (Mack), pickup trucks (2015 Chevrolet Silverado and two 2017 Dodge Ram 3500s) and a service van (2017 Mercedes-Benz Sprinter 3500) with Kargo Master upfit.

The go-to machines are two Komatsu PC35 rubber-tracked excavators (2014 and 2017) with an auger attachment and a 2018 Takeuchi TL8 tracked skid-steer with a RockHound attachment.

"We used to run everything with backhoes," DiGregorio says. "But with the excavators, it's much easier to work in tighter spaces. We need an opening 6 feet wide to get into the site with them, and they weigh about 8,000 pounds." A larger Komatsu PC138 excavator is rented for larger septic systems and stormwater work.

Septic system pumping has become a major revenue source. The company used to outsource its pumping service to another contractor but brought it inhouse in 2014. Now Cook and a 2007 Mack vacuum truck with a 4,000-gallon steel tank (Presvac Systems) and (National Vacuum Equipment Challenger 4307) vacuum blower pump 1,200 tanks per year. That includes servicing customers on holding tanks or with failing systems that need pumping as often as every one or two weeks.

MEETING ALL CHALLENGES

The stormwater side of the business includes double-ring infiltrometer testing (similar to perc testing) for retention basins and excavating for those basins. "In our area, if you put in a pool or patio or an addition on your house, you have to control your runoff," Dell'Arciprete says. "For years, everyone ignored stormwater and a lot of runoff damage had been occurring on neighboring properties near streams and water reservoirs. Now the pendulum has swung to the opposite side."

DiGregorio adds, "We worked on a brand-new \$2 million, 5,500-squarefoot home. Every drop of water, from the roof and driveways and all the impervious surfaces is captured in inlets and downspouts and goes into a basin 90 feet long, 20 feet wide and 8 feet deep."

Another line of work is pipe inspection and cleaning. The company uses

"For years, everyone ignored stormwater and a lot of runoff damage had been occurring on neighboring properties near streams and water reservoirs. Now the pendulum has swung to the opposite side." T.J. Dell'Arciprete

RIDGID push cameras with cables 85 to 200 feet long for pipes 1.5 to 6 inches. For cleaning, the company deploys a Spartan Tool Warrior 4,000 psi/20 gpm trailer-mounted jetter and a Spartan 717 Electric Mini Jet (2,700 psi/4 gpm). Both use an assortment of Warthog nozzles (StoneAge).

While the business grows, the partners plan to spend more time building an office infrastructure able to support further expansion. That includes an emphasis on marketing.

"We just invested about \$10,000 in branding," Dell'Arciprete says. "All our trucks look the same and carry our new logo. We have new uniforms, and we've ordered winter gear. On streets where half of the clients are with us already, we're marketing to potential new clients with postcards and (email software program) Constant Contact.

"This is also important to our annual maintenance clients because it helps us schedule efficiently. We drive down prices by going from house to house on the same street on the same day or week, depending on the number of homes to be serviced. That way we're not running to the same street sporadically throughout the course of a year.

"We just want to do everything as best as possible, and if we don't, we'll fix it. There's nothing we can't do or nothing we can't fix."

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Make Sure Your Team Is Prepared When Disaster Strikes

An emergency plan will serve your installing crew well when they navigate trenches, work with heavy machinery or plug in the power tools By Jared Raney

f your crew member was pressure testing a pipe when suddenly the plug was blown out and that worker was thrown from the ladder and became pinned inside a manhole, would you know what to do?

For the crew at Horizontal Boring, that's not a hypothetical scenario. It happened to one of its workers, and thankfully they knew exactly how to handle the situation.

"They had to execute the emergency action plan to remove the injured employee from the manhole, bring him up to safety, get the ambulance and safety manager on site and assess the injury," says Ernie Romero, owner of the company, based in Phoenix.

As a result, the employee escaped the situation with no more than minor injuries, showing that emergency action plans can be the deciding factor in whether an employee lives or dies on a work site accident. "It's very important to have somebody involved — whoever's dealing with your safety plans and your emergency action plans — who understands the OSHA requirements, to have a background in safety, and to really understand the requirements and the actions necessary." Ernie Romero



DRAFTING A PLAN

With all the paperwork and red tape attached to every work site, it can be easy to overlook planning for hypothetical emergency situations. But it's an item that must be crossed off — if not to avoid penalties, then simply for peace of mind.

"That's the last call you ever want to get — an injury on site," Romero says. "At times there are sites that may have some varying circumstances that require we implement an emergency action plan."

Beyond simple best practice, if caught without an emergency action plan, your company will be fined by OSHA. Their safety and health regulations for construction require emergency action plans in writing for each construction site, which "must cover those designated actions employers and employees must take to ensure employee safety from fire and other emergencies."

Penalties can range from \$10,000 to over \$100,000. There are different standards of violation; for example, initial posting requirement violations are listed as \$12,934 per violation, but a willful or repeated violation jumps to \$129,336 per violation.

OSHA provides information through its website on emergency action plans and requirements, including an eTool to help companies develop their plans.

"It's typically going to consist of the possible emergencies on any given site, what may happen if that does take place, and then we'll address actionable steps to follow, and we'd have the written procedures for that," Romero says. "We're going to have exit routes — we usually like to set two meeting points for everybody if an emergency takes place, a primary and a secondary, to ensure if the emergency takes place at the primary meet point, then we have the secondary to meet at. Those are really the general points we're looking to cover in our action plans."

Emergency action plans can be as in-depth as outlining the specific safety duties of each employee on site, even down to subcontractors involved in the work, as well as safety inspection procedures, accident investigation and reporting.

TAKING THE LEAD

The supervisor in charge of setting up the emergency plan will look at what reporting agencies are nearest, as well as the closest hospitals, so workers know who to contact and where to go.

"I think it's very important to have somebody involved — whoever's dealing with your safety plans and your emergency action plans — who understands the OSHA requirements, to have a background in safety, and to really understand the requirements and the actions necessary should certain events occur," Romero says.

Horizontal Boring has a dedicated, full-time safety manager with 30 years' experience in safety management and a comprehensive safety-first program, ensuring safety requirements like emergency action plans don't fall through the cracks.

That manager runs monthly companywide safety meetings, as well as weekly on-site meetings for each work site. The company's overall safety program is constantly evolving.

IT WORKS

Horizontal Boring's case of its employee who was injured in the blowout is proof that having an emergency plan can save lives.

"They were prepared for it, and it's always good to see," Romero says. "We're all responsible for safety, all of us out on site, and we take it extremely seriously. Accidents do happen and things happen that are outside of our control. But when it does happen, you just want to ensure that you have the best plans in place and everyone is best prepared to deal with those situations."



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SYSTEM PROFILE

An Iowa Farming Community Shapes Its Decentralized Wastewater Future

A complex mix of individual and cluster systems helps Rowan, Iowa, clean up the environment and serve the treatment needs of homes and businesses for generations to come By David Steinkraus

✿ Infiltrator Water Technologies chambers were part of the wastewater solution for many homes in Rowan, Iowa. In some cases, the crew from Mort's Water Co. was able to rearrange drainfields to save space. (Photos courtesy of Mort's Water Co.) R owan, Iowa, is a small community of just over 150 people, but a few years ago it confronted a big change. The state required the upgrade of all the wastewater systems serving the city because effluent was flowing into a field tile that emptied into a creek about a quarter mile from its borders.

Mort's Water Co., a five-generation firm based in nearby Latimer, received the contract for the yearlong project. The company knew the project was coming. During the city's three-year planning process, Mort's had been asked to provide expert advice. As the winning bidder for the job, the company put its expertise to the test.

Systems

The mix of lot sizes and available areas for absorption fields resulted in a mix of solutions.

- There are:
- 50 conventional gravity septic tanks feeding individual drainfields that use Infiltrator Water Technologies Quick4 Plus chambers.
- 16 septic-tank-effluent-pump tanks feeding individual drainfields with Infiltrator Water Technologies chambers.
- 18 STEP tanks feeding pressure mains that lead to two drainfields for a cluster of homes.
- Three Orenco Systems AdvanTex pods feeding individual drainfields.

For the conventional and STEP systems, Mort's used two-compartment tanks from Wieser Precast Steps in Stewartville, Minnesota. The AdvanTex AX20 systems were offset on top of the Wieser Precast Step tanks. >> Many homes in Rowan, Iowa, were converted from a community collections system to individual gravity-flow tanks feeding a drainfield on the property. Wieser Precast Steps tanks were used, as well as Orenco Systems risers and Orenco Systems and Polylok lids.

The team from Mort's Water Co. lays pipe to feed 4,200 feet of Infiltrator Water Technologies chambers for the large cluster system as part of the wastewater upgrades in Rowan.



STEP systems used pumps and pump vaults from Clarus Environmental. All tanks use Orenco Systems risers. Half the tanks are topped with Orenco Systems lids and half with Polylok lids.

The project also required making 91 sewer hookups, laying 20,400 linear feet of Infiltrator Water Technologies chambers and boring 6,000 linear feet of 1 1/2-inch force main.

About 16 wells, hand-pumped and used mainly to water gardens, had to be capped and abandoned because they were too close to a treatment system.

To do the work, Mort's used a:

- 2017 Case CX80C excavator.
- 2017 Case TR340 compact track loader. This was acquired for this project and was very useful because it could be driven across drainfields as soon as they were backfilled.
- 2005 Sterling Acterra tractor with a Knapheide service body.
- 2009 Sterling Acterra dump truck with a box from Godwin Mfg. Co.
- 2019 M2 106 Freightliner with a 3,650-gallon stainless steel tank and National Vacuum Equipment 4310 blower from Advance Pump & Equipment. This truck pumped out old tanks before they were abandoned.
- MX7 Harley Power Rake by Paladin Attachments for grading.
- 2010 Case 36B mini-excavator.
- 2010 Astec boring machine.
- 2014 Case 590N backhoe.



System Profile

Location:	Rowan, Iowa
Facility served:	City of Rowan
Designer:	Forrest Aldrich, Veenstra & Kimm,
	West Des Moines
Installer:	Mort's Water Co., Latimer
Type of system:	Gravity and pressure systems
	with some AdvanTex pretreatment
Site conditions:	Loamy silt

Starting easy

When the work started in the fall of 2017, installations began with the gravity systems on lots with the most space because those were similar to typical residential installations performed by the company, says Brandon Morton, the project manager for Mort's.

"We wanted to get a good start on the job because we were not sure how long the work would take, and we didn't want to run over our time. As work progressed, the city gave us needed extensions for subcontractor work because they wanted the job done right," Morton says.

Every one to two weeks, the Mort's crew would look over the jobs ahead and pick five or six properties to work on. They would examine the engineering drawings and in some cases suggest changes so drainfields better fit the space. They would have all the utilities located at once, then pick one to two properties for each day. Tanks were delivered on each working day, and the Infiltrator Water Technologies chambers were installed after. For most gravity systems, Morton and his partner Travis Hunter put in two tanks per day.

After the simplest installations, work shifted to the lots with tighter space. Then the crew tackled the STEP systems feeding a drainfield on the



"We wanted to get a good start on the job because we were not sure how long the work would take, and we didn't want to run over our time. As work progressed, the city gave us needed extensions for subcontractor work because they wanted the job done right."

Brandon Morton

property. Last they worked on the AdvanTex systems and the STEP systems feeding the cluster drainfields.

Plans originally called for eight AdvanTex units, but once the crew was on site, they saw ways to lay out drainfields so gravity or STEP systems were possible. As a result, only three AdvanTex units were used for the project.

On a few lots, the crew found steel tanks that had disintegrated. "They were all dirt. The liquid was running over the top from the inlet to the outlet. It was working, but it wasn't doing any treatment at all," Morton says. It was easiest to pull those tanks out.

Most of the existing concrete tanks were not up to code and were abandoned in place. On a few properties, owners had installed newer tanks that could be reused for the new systems.

Drainfields for the cluster systems were installed in the fall 2017 so soil could settle during the winter. Distribution boxes and incoming pressure lines were laid at the same time. Morton and Hunter did about 90 percent of the work on their own. Directional boring for lines was done by the company's specialized three-person crew, and wells were abandoned by the company's licensed pump installers.

Service to homes was interrupted for two to three hours at most. The hard part of that was estimating what time tanks had to be delivered based on how much space there was and how deep it had to be placed. New tanks were connected on the same day they were installed, but drainfield lines didn't have to be connected immediately because tanks would not be filled for a couple of weeks, Morton says.

The old wastewater system was abandoned in part or in total depending on each house, Morton says. For homes with perimeter tiles and floor drains, the crew plumbed from the old tank's inlet to outlet to preserve the floor drain. In homes without floor drains, technicians abandoned the old tanks in place by plugging outlets.

Necessary plumbing

Inside plumbing was done by Morton, Hunter and another crew on rainy days and during winter. Under Iowa code, anything that touches a human body or is from a human body must go to a wastewater system, Morton says. But in one home, for example, they found a clothes washer discharging into a floor drain. "We had to re-plumb that washing machine so water flowed by gravity into the system. If we can keep everything gravity, it's better for us and better for the customers because then there are no mechanicals to deal with."

In some cases, they could raise the height of the wastewater outflow. In other cases, homeowners opted to abandon a basement shower to avoid the need for a pump to lift the wastewater. "These are older houses with 7- to 8-foot basement ceilings," Morton says. About a fourth of the properties needed to have wastewater discharges raised to maintain gravity flow. continued >>



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7000 Apple Tree Ave. Bergen, New York 14416 >> Chris Vanness, foreground, and Travis Hunter, in the excavator, lay a row of Infiltrator Water Technologies chambers in Rowan, Iowa. Mort's Water Co. converted the town from a collector system emptying into a creek to a modern wastewater system with a variety of treatment solutions. The project included laying about 20,000 linear feet of Infiltrator Water Technologies chambers.

Part of the work in Rowan included maintaining gravity flows from homes into new wastewater systems. In some cases, that required raising the outflow of household discharges. Brandon Morton is working on that here.



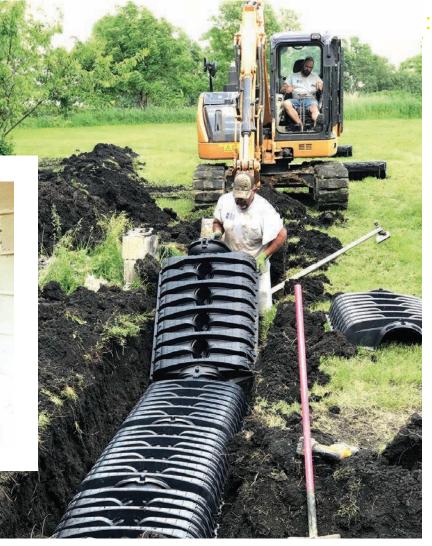
Some discharge pipes from homes were about a foot below grade to maintain a gravity system. As long as there is snow on the ground, those pipes will be insulated against winter freezes, Morton says. Because driveways are cleaned of snow in winter, pipes running beneath them were insulated with pink sheet insulation cut into 2-inch-by-8-foot sections to fit in the pipe ditch.

The company's licensed plumber changed the path of backwash water from the iron filter for the city domestic water system. Wash water was flowing into a floor drain that eventually emptied into the same creek taking the rest of the city effluent, but the Iowa Department of Natural Resources didn't want this because of the iron sediments in the wash water. So Mort's plumbed the flow into four 3,000-gallon holding tanks that are pumped as needed.

The Rowan job was a great learning experience for the company, Morton says. Rethinking drainfields for tight spaces in the city has helped installers more efficiently arrange drainfields for rural systems the company has done since.

There is still a little finish work left in Rowan, primarily seeding after the thaw in the spring of 2019.

Mort's has been in operation for decades and has always done septic, pump and well work, and water conditioning but this was its first community project, Morton says. It may not be the last. More communities in this area of north-central Iowa (about 87 miles north of Des Moines) have received warning letters from the state about the need for wastewater upgrades, and some of those communities are within easy working distance of Mort's base in Latimer. With one project under its belt, Mort's is ready to help other Iowa communities improve their wastewater systems and protect the rural environment.



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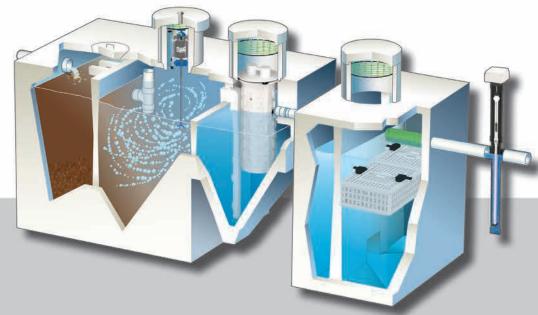


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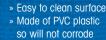
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Florida's Governor and Legislature Push for Onsite System Oversight, Periodic Inspections

By David Steinkraus

New Florida governor Ron DeSantis made recent water policy announcements.

During a trip around the state, DeSantis announced a multipoint executive order to address some of the water-quality issues plaguing the state. One part of the order instructed the state Department of Environmental Protection to establish a septic tank remediation program that would include a requirement for local government matching funds. DeSantis told the DEP to identify opportunities to invest in green infrastructure, such as wetland treatment systems, and he told the department to create an outreach campaign about the importance of conservation and reuse.

DeSantis also ordered the DEP to assemble a task force on the state's problem with blue-green algae blooms, participate in the state Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission Harmful Algal Bloom Task Force, continue to explore options to stop Georgia's water use from affecting the Apalachicola River and Apalachicola Bay, and appoint a chief science officer who would prioritize the collection of data to support research work on current environmental concerns.

Republican DeSantis won his position by a close margin following a recount in his race with Tallahassee Mayor Andrew Gillum. Environmental issues were among the top priorities discussed during the campaign. Over the past couple of years, state news organizations have spent considerable time reporting on algae blooms and water-quality problems that threaten public health and the state's vast tourism industry.

A study published by Miami-Dade County warned of increased danger to onsite systems because of sea-level rise associated with climate change.

About 108,000 properties in the county use onsite systems, the report says. Rising sea levels push groundwater higher, reducing the distance from groundwater to drainfield and thus reducing the ability of soil to provide effluent treatment. More than half of the county's 105,000 residential onsite systems have annual issues now, the report says.

Removing every tank and installing connections to the municipal sewer system would cost about \$3.3 billion, the report says. At the moment, people who want to connect must cover the cost themselves. Although the average cost is about \$15,000, a county official says in some areas the cost would be about \$50,000 per property.

Other water action is happening in the Legislature.

House committees have HB 85, which, among other things, would require onsite systems to be inspected at least once every five years unless the system is covered by an operating permit.

In the Senate, the Agriculture, Environment and General Government Appropriations Subcommittee heard testimony from a researcher who claims failing septic tanks are the biggest source of nutrient loads in state waterways and should be the priority in solving water-quality problems.

Brian Lapointe, from Florida Atlantic University, says the state needs to go to war on blue-green algae and do that by focusing on septic systems, not the Everglades reservoir. The reservoir is intended to trap nutrient-rich water flowing off agricultural fields, and it was a topic for DeSantis. In his executive order, he instructed the South Florida Water Management District to immediately start designing the next phase of the reservoir, formally called the Everglades Agricultural Area Storage Reservoir Project.

Lapointe's testimony began with a video funded by the Florida Chamber of Commerce, which initially opposed the reservoir, writes the *Tampa Bay Times*.

Julie Wraithmell, executive director of Audubon Florida, faults Lapointe's presentation and tells the *Tampa Bay Times* she doesn't understand why onsite systems should be blamed for most nutrient problems.

"There is no smoking gun for our water-quality issues and no silver bullet," she says. "It's unfortunate because while (onsite is) part of the science, it's not all of the science, and for decision-makers to make good decisions, they need all the information."

Montana

Ravalli County in the western part of the state sees a problem developing with onsite systems and is trying to get ahead of it.

"We've seen requests to replace septic systems from the late '70s and early '80s coming in. It's only a matter of time before those installed in the late '80s and early '90s will begin to fail," says county Environment Health Director John Palacio, according to the *Ravalli Republic* newspaper. "We want to have a policy in place so we can act quickly, not just for the landowner, but also for neighboring properties that might be impacted."

So the county is formulating a set of guidelines to govern replacement of unpermitted systems. There was no permitting system before 1972, yet some homes built between 1972 and 1982 also do not have permits, and the county records for that period are sketchy.

The proposed policy would declare systems installed from 1972 through 1982 to be pre-existing systems, and replacing them would require an installation permit. No expansions would be allowed.

Replacements for systems installed between Jan. 1, 1983, and April 29, 1993, would have to meet current regulations, but again, there would be no expansion allowed to accommodate a change of use at the property. Any system installed after April 29, 1993, would also have to meet current regulations.



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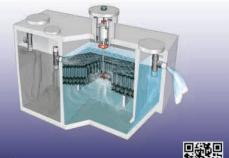
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RULES AND REGS

In other Montana news, a grant from the state Department of Natural Resources will help Lincoln County residents get low-interest loans to fix onsite system problems or connect to municipal sewer lines. The department is providing \$40,000 that will create a revolving-loan fund. Interest on money not loaned out will be plowed back into the fund.

To be eligible, people must provide a letter from a bank showing they have been denied personal loans to fix problems, reports *The Western News* based in Libby. No other financial information will be required. Interest will be 4 percent. Property owners would have to get bids from two installers.

Lincoln County forms the northwestern corner of Montana at the Canadian border.

California

San Diego County supervisors waived impact fees in order to encourage people to build "granny flats" on properties in unincorporated communities. Onsite wastewater impact fees are waived along with fees for roads and infrastructure, parks and drainage improvement. The program is a five-year trial and will cost the county \$11 million to offset the lost fee revenue.

San Diego County allows granny flats to be up to 1,200 square feet. They may be free-standing or attached to existing homes and may include kitchens, bathrooms, living areas and private entrances. They may not be sold as individual homes but may be rented or may provide living space for family, friends, students, the elderly, the disabled or in-home caregivers.

A state law easing restrictions on granny flats took effect in 2018. Both the state and local actions are intended to help ease the shortage of affordable homes in California.

Colorado

Montezuma County commissioners put a six-month hold on a new rule requiring onsite system inspections when a property is sold. The rule took effect for 2019.

After complaints from property owners and the real estate industry, one of the commissioners who supported the rule changed his mind about it. He now says it is government overreach and imposes burdensome costs, according to *The Journal* newspaper in Cortez.

Point-of-sale inspection requirements are an option allowed by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, and 22 counties have such programs. Chuck Cousino, a water-quality official with the department, says the concerns aired by citizens in Monetzuma County are common when inspection programs begin. Objections fade as initial glitches are solved and people adjust, he says.

Alaska

Because of the prevalence of steel tanks in Anchorage, the state's largest city has new rules in place to govern the installation of tanks.

Starting last fall, inspectors were required to measure the liquid level in tanks to determine whether they may be leaking. If a tank is 20 to 30 years old and the liquid level is normal, owners are advised the tank may be approaching the end of its life. A tank 30 or more years old should be replaced or at a minimum exposed so it can be examined for deterioration.

Starting this month, only steel tanks coated on the inside and outside with polyurethane will be allowed for installation. Also, tanks must have an access opening in the first compartment that is at least 20 inches in diameter. Other compartments must each have an access pipe of at least 4 inches in diameter with an airtight cap.

Wisconsin

After several delays of deadlines, this year Douglas County must comply with the state onsite inspection tracking rule passed in 2000. The county recently began mailing the first set of notices to property owners telling them their systems must be inspected once every three years. Systems installed since July 2000 have already been required to have a maintenance plan.

If a system is failing, the property owner will have 12 months to fix or replace it unless there is an imminent threat to public health, reports the *Superior Telegram* newspaper. The county is at the northwestern tip of Wisconsin, and it touches the southwestern end of Lake Superior.

In central Wisconsin, a septic pumper in Bloomer must pay \$20,661 in fines and another \$9,839 in court costs and fees after pleading guilty to improper disposal of sewage, failing to leave fields litter-free, improper recordkeeping and failing to properly treat the soil.

The state filed charges against Jonathan Bischel and Bischel's Septic Service after an investigation that lasted several years, reports the *Leader-Telegram* newspaper of Eau Claire. Court records say Bischel bought an old gravel pit and illegally dumped sewage in it. Investigators from the state Department of Natural Resources installed a GPS tracker on one of Bischel's trucks, and it showed he disposed of wastewater at the gravel pit 35 times from August to September 2014.

State conservation wardens also found litter, such as tampon sleeves and pieces of clothing, in sludge Bischel spread on fields.

Idaho

Blaine County commissioners are beginning the process to relax the county's onsite rules in order to spur development.

The changes will address a continuing concern from developers who face a local rule requiring lots be at least 1 acre in size if a home will not be connected to municipal sewer lines. The land area restriction is intended to provide room for a drainfield, reports the *Idaho Mountain Express* newspaper. Kathy Grotto, the county's land use deputy administrator, tells commissioners she favors broad language to allow any type of wastewater system that regulatory agencies can approve. That would allow the use of new or different technologies, she says.

Blaine County is in the central part of the state and includes the ski resort area of Sun Valley. \square

"Rules and Regs" is a monthly feature in *Onsite Installer*[™]. We welcome information about state or local regulations of potential broad interest to onsite contractors. Send ideas to editor@onsiteinstaller.com.



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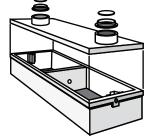
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Jim Anderson, Ph.D., and David Gustafson, P.E., are connected with the University of Minnesota onsite wastewater treatment education program. David is extension onsite sewage treatment educator. Jim is former director of the university's Water Resources Center and is now an emeritus professor. Readers are welcome to submit questions or article suggestions to Jim and David. Write to ander045@umn.edu.

You Say Soil Mottles; I Say Redoximorphic Features

You don't have to be a soil scientist to evaluate soil coloration found in the field. We'll teach you the basics. By Jim Anderson and David Gustafson

s we move into the meat of our "field" season, we've had a few questions about identifying redoximorphic features in the soil and how they relate to the presence of seasonal or permanent zones of saturation that are considered limiting soil layers. Identifying features related to saturated soil zones sets the baseline for determining separation distance from the bottom of the system infiltration surface to the limiting layer.

These features at one time were referred to as soil mottles. However, this created confusion because soil mottles referred to any occurrence of color differences within a soil horizon giving the horizon a mottled appearance. For identification of saturated conditions, specific kinds of "mottles" needed to be recognized.

Understanding how redoximorphic features form requires some knowledge of the chemistry and microbiology involved. We do not expect you are or need to be chemists or microbiologists, but it is good to know how the features form. The knowledge can help you sort out if the features you identify in the field are due to soil saturation.

PAINTING THE SOIL

In subsoil horizons, iron oxide minerals give the horizons red, yellow, brown or orange coloration. Manganese oxide minerals produce black colors. These mineral oxides naturally coat the surfaces of individual sand, silt and clay particles. Think of it as a coat of paint on the surfaces of the particles. Without this paint, the particles would be gray in color.

Red, yellow, brown and orange colors occur when iron is in its oxidized state — that is, in the presence of oxygen. Black colors occur when manganese is in its oxidized state. These minerals can be chemically reduced in soils under certain conditions. This means that the iron and manganese ions accept electrons from a source other than oxygen, and in soils, this is usually from organic matter being decomposed by bacteria.

When a soil is well-aerated (not saturated), bacteria consume and reduce oxygen in the air-filled pores. When a soil is saturated, the bacteria consume and reduce the oxygen dissolved in the water. When the oxygen is gone, the bacteria continue to break down the organic matter but they also reduce nitrate-nitrogen and the manganese and iron oxides. The chemical reactions occur in sequence, so oxygen goes first, followed by nitrate, manganese and iron.

When iron and manganese are reduced, several things begin to happen. Iron and manganese dissolve in water, soil color changes to gray, and iron and manganese move with the soil water to other parts of the soil horizon or are

We do not expect you are or need to be chemists or microbiologists, but it is good to know how the features form. The knowledge can help you sort out

if the features you identify in the field are due to soil saturation.

leached from the soil. The term redoximorphic refers to the reduction and oxidation chemical reactions and the resulting appearance or morphology of the soil horizon.

When the soil becomes unsaturated and aerated again, areas of the soil where the iron and manganese vacated appear gray due to the natural color of the sand, silt and clay particles mentioned above. The areas where iron and manganese have migrated to are red, brown, yellow, orange or black in color. This pattern provides a mottled appearance to the soil horizon and reflects the fact that the soil is saturated for periods of time long enough for the chemical reactions to occur.

While the length of time it takes for the reaction to occur varies from place to place, it implies for our purpose of identifying a limiting soil layer that saturation occurs for a long enough period that it will interfere with acceptance and treatment of septic tank effluent.

EVALUATION

Three major kinds of features can be recognized in the field by an experienced soil scientist or site evaluator. We maintain that installers and service providers with a knowledge of soils in their area can also identify these features. For this reason, we regularly conduct field workshops or activities to evaluate these features.

The three kinds of features are redox concentrations, redox depletions and reduced matrices.

Redox concentrations are bodies where iron and manganese have accumulated. These accumulations can have several forms including nodules or concretions, soft masses or pore linings. Nodules and concretions are firm to extremely firm, irregularly shaped bodies with diffuse boundaries. Soft masses are just that irregular and soft within the inside (or matrix) of the soil



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structural units or peds. Pore linings are where the accumulations are along a root channel or crack.

Redox depletions are areas vacated by the mineral oxides either along old root channels or in the matrix of the peds.

Reduced matrices have the low soil colors in place but when removed from the profile and exposed to oxygen will change color as iron and manganese in the soil is oxidized. This type of condition usually means the soil is most often saturated and water movement through the soil is very slow because the iron and manganese have not leached out of the profile.

With this background information on formation and kinds of redoximorphic features, upcoming columns will discuss interpretation of what is seen in the field and relate the interpretation to some of the questions we are most often asked about redoximorphic features.

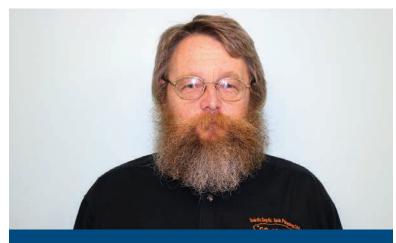


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Nova Scotia Wastewater Pros Working Closely With the Department of Environment

More residents in this lightly populated province utilize onsite systems than municipal wastewater treatment, so customer education is an important job for local installers and pumpers **Compiled by Betty Dageforde**

In States Snapshot, we visit with a member of a state, provincial or national trade association in the decentralized wastewater industry. This time we learn about a member of Waste Water Nova Scotia.



James Baxter operations manager Business: Baird's Septic Tank Pumping,

Upper Onslow, Nova Scotia Age: 60 Years in the industry: 18

Association involvement:

We've been members for quite some time in Waste Water Nova Scotia. Our owner, Allan Baird, and a couple other gentlemen had formed the Septic Pumpers Association of Nova Scotia in 1992. I was secretary and treasurer for many years. About 2008 we merged with Waste Water Nova Scotia, which was a much bigger organization and had a longer reach with the Department of Environment.

Benefits of belonging to the association:

The association works closely with the Nova Scotia Department of Environment. It has a very good website. And it gets any news back to us

faster than waiting for a letter from the department. We were probably the first province to require certification for every pumper and portable restroom operator.

Biggest issue facing your association right now:

There are a couple issues — keeping up with the changes in regulations and inconsistencies with the various regional (Department of Environment) offices. What you can do in one region may not be accepted in a different region. It's definitely something getting worked on. Another problem is people doing things "off the books" and not complying with regulations.

Our crew includes:

Allan Baird, owner; Deanna Baird (Allan Baird's daughter-in-law) in the office; Rob Mont, who handles portable restrooms; and septic drivers Derek Reynolds, Brian Allan, Virginia Blondon and Calvin Schellenberg

Typical day on the job:

I'm usually at the office by 7 a.m., checking the phone for messages. If I feel real ambitious, I'll even go onto the computer and look at the emails, but I usually wait for Deanna Baird to do that. And then I work on the assignments for the day before the drivers arrive — who's to do what, where do they go, seeing which vehicles will be required. Then when Allan Baird is not around, I take his disabled 40-year-old daughter to and from work. During the rest of the day, I will answer the phone, do the bookkeeping, prepare checks, pay bills and troubleshoot problems that come up. I also help customers who call in with issues.

Helping hands - Indispensable crew member:

As far as I'm concerned, everybody is indispensable. We all carry our weight; we all know what needs to be done and we make sure it gets done. It's that simple.

The job I'll never forget:

Sometimes people don't think before they do expansions or modifications to their property. There was a job where the owners had put an extension onto their house at ground level, and when the septic tank needed to be pumped, it was found underneath the bed in a bedroom. We had to move the bed, cut a hole in the floor and put the hose in through the window.



Most challenging site I've worked on:

Coming up to spec for the updated Department of Environment regulations was a challenge. Everybody with a lagoon for disposal, whether private or municipal, had to come up to the new spec by the end of 2010, which meant a lot of upgrading for most everyone. It took us three years. That included building a completely new lagoon system to accept the material. We built it adjacent to our existing lagoon. The main change was size. It was double what we were used to.

We did the lion's share of the work ourselves but did contract with people to bring in the gravel to build our drying pad and do the excavating and dozing. It was a juggling act because we knew people were down there working and we had to make sure we didn't disrupt the flow of that work when we had to get into our existing disposal site. Our septic lagoon was the first one that has a discharge that goes through a natural filter system — cattails — through a maze. It was Allan Baird's idea. He tossed it to an engineer who figured it out. The success of it was good enough that there have been four more installed in the province.

The craziest question I've been asked by a customer:

A lady called to get her septic tank pumped and she asked me: "Why do I even have one of those things? I'm from Calgary and all we did was flush the toilet and it went away." I had to explain what she had and why she had it. It's understandable — Calgary is on a municipal system. In Nova Scotia, approximately 55 percent of the population is on onsite septic systems. I've talked to many people who were brought up on municipal systems and they don't really understand the workings or maintenance requirements of a septic system. And just like when the province started promoting recycling and they put it into the education system and the children educated their parents, we strongly believe septic information should be in the education system and let the children educate their parents.

If I could change one industry regulation, it would be:

I don't think I would change anything so much as I want more enforcement. It's all right to have a regulation, but it's no good if it's not enforced. For example, in this province you're not allowed to land-apply unless it's treated but there are some out there who are not exactly keeping up with that. Unless someone files a complaint, the department is not allowed to take any action. << Allan Baird, owner of Baird's Septic Tank Pumping, looks over the company's settling lagoon where cattails filter wastewater. (Photos courtesy of James Baxter)

Technician Virginia Blondon outside a 2015 Freightliner M2 with a Vacutrux steel tank and Fruitland pump.



If I wasn't working in the wastewater industry, I would:

Before this I worked as a contractor so that's what I know. When people ask me how I got into this business, I always joke that it was the greatest mistake of my life. I read an ad in the paper but it didn't tell me anything other than they needed certain skills, which I had. I came into the yard, I saw what it was and I had to decide: Do I put the brakes on or keep going? I put the brakes on, and it's been the greatest thing that's ever happened to me. It truly is a joy. The people in this industry are so friendly and helpful.

Crystal ball time -This is my outlook for the wastewater industry:

I do believe onsite systems will be changing more. They're probably going to go more toward treatment plant-type of ideas as opposed to the traditional field-bed ideas, and more homes tied into one system as opposed to having multiple systems. That would give better control for the authorities. Instead of looking at tens of thousands, they'll be looking at thousands. I think we are going to see mandatory pumping. It exists in Norway and several regions in Quebéc where homeowners pay for the service in their taxes and the pumper is contracted by the municipality. I think we'll see disposal going more toward dewatering. The problem with that is what do you do with the dewatered material? At a recent (Portable Sanitation Association International) convention in Florida, we went to a wastewater plant that is pelletizing the material into fertilizer, which has tremendous promise. The biggest issue with that is that to sell it, you have to disclose what it is and public perception of human waste is a major issue.

ASSOCIATIONS LIST

Serving the Industry

Visit your state and provincial trade associations

ALABAMA

Alabama Onsite Wastewater Association; www.aowainfo.org; 334-396-3434

ARIZONA

Arizona Onsite Wastewater Recycling Association; www.azowra.org; 928-443-0333

ARKANSAS

Arkansas Onsite Wastewater Association; www.arkowa.com

CALIFORNIA

California Onsite Wastewater Association; www.cowa.org; 530-513-6658

COLORADO

Colorado Professionals in Onsite Wastewater; www.cpow.net; 720-626-8989

CONNECTICUT

Connecticut Onsite Wastewater Recycling Association; www.cowra-online.org; 860-267-1057

DELAWARE

Delaware On-Site Wastewater Recycling Association; www.dowra.org

FLORIDA

Florida Onsite Wastewater Association; www.fowaonsite.com; 321-363-1590

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Georgia Onsite Wastewater Association; www.onsitewastewater.org; 706-407-2552

Georgia F.O.G. Alliance; www.georgiafog.com

IDAHO

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IOWA

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KANSAS

Kansas Small Flows Association; www.ksfa.org; 913-594-1472

KENTUCKY

Kentucky Onsite Wastewater Association; www.kentuckyonsite.org; 855-818-5692

MAINE

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MARYLAND

Maryland Onsite Wastewater Professionals Association; www.mowpa.org; 443-570-2029

MASSACHUSETTS

Yankee Onsite Wastewater Association; www.maowp.org; 781-939-5710

MICHIGAN

Michigan Onsite Wastewater Recycling Association; www.mowra.org

Michigan Septic Tank Association; www.msta.biz; 989-808-8648

MINNESOTA

Minnesota Onsite Wastewater Association; www.mowa-mn.com; 888-810-4178

MISSISSIPPI

Mississippi Pumpers Association; www.mspumpersassociation.com, 601-249-2066

MISSOURI

Missouri Smallflows Organization; www.mosmallflows.org; 417-631-4027

NEBRASKA

Nebraska On-site Waste Water Association; www.nowwa.org; 402-476-0162

NEW HAMPSHIRE

New Hampshire Association of Septage Haulers; www.nhash.com; 603-831-8670

Granite State Designers and Installers Association; www.gsdia.org; 603-228-1231

NEW MEXICO

Professional Onsite Wastewater Reuse Association of New Mexico; www.powranm.org; 505-989-7676

NEW YORK

Long Island Liquid Waste Association, Inc.; www.lilwa.org; 631-585-0448

NORTH CAROLINA

North Carolina Septic Tank Association; www.ncsta.net; 336-416-3564

North Carolina Portable Toilet Group; www.ncportabletoiletgroup.org; 252-249-1097

North Carolina Pumper Group; www.ncpumpergroup.org; 252-249-1097

OHIO

Ohio Onsite Wastewater Association; www.ohioonsite.org; 888-294-0084

OREGON

Oregon Onsite Wastewater Association; www.o2wa.org; 541-389-6692

PENNSYLVANIA

Pennsylvania Association of Sewage Enforcement Officers; www.pa-seo.org; 717-761-8648

Pennsylvania Onsite Wastewater Recycling Association; www.powra.org

Pennsylvania Septage Management Association; www.psma.net; 717-763-7762

TENNESSEE

Tennessee Onsite Wastewater Association; www.tnonsite.org

TEXAS

Texas On-Site Wastewater Association; www.txowa.org; 409-718-0645

Education 4 Onsite Wastewater Management; www.e4owm.com; 713-774-6694

VIRGINIA

Virginia Onsite Wastewater Recycling Association; www.vowra.org; 540-377-9830

WASHINGTON

Washington On-Site Sewage Association; www.wossa.org; 253-770-6594

WISCONSIN

Wisconsin Onsite Water Recycling Association; www.wowra.com; 888-782-6815

Wisconsin Liquid Waste Carriers Association: www.wlwca.com; 888-782-6815

NATIONAL

Water Environment Federation; www.wef.org; 800-666-0206

National Onsite Wastewater Recycling Association; www.nowra.org; 800-966-2942

National Association of Wastewater Technicians: www.nawt.org; 800-236-6298

CANADA

ALBERTA

Alberta Onsite Wastewater Management Association; www.aowma.com; 877-489-7471

BRITISH COLUMBIA

British Columbia Onsite Wastewater Association; www.bcossa.org; 778-432-2120

WCOWMA Onsite Wastewater Management of B.C.; www.wcowma-bc.com: 877-489-7471

MANITOBA

Manitoba Onsite Wastewater Management Association; www.mowma.org; 877-489-7471

Onsite Wastewater Systems Installers of Manitoba, Inc.; www.owsim.com: 204-771-0455

NEW BRUNSWICK

New Brunswick Association of Onsite Wastewater Professionals; www.nbaowp.ca; 506-455-5477

NOVA SCOTIA

Waste Water Nova Scotia; www.wwns.ca; 902-246-2131

ONTARIO

Ontario Onsite Wastewater Association; www.oowa.org; 855-905-6692

Ontario Association of Sewage Industry Services; www.oasisontario.on.ca; 877-202-0082

SASKATCHEWAN

Saskatchewan Onsite Wastewater Management Association; www.sowma.ca; 877-489-7471

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INDUSTRY NEWS

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