



# Septic Maintenance Programs

Proper septic system use and routine care are vital to protecting public health, preserving Virginia's groundwater, lakes, streams and waterways, and avoiding costly repairs that can result from neglect. To ensure water quality standards are consistently met throughout the Commonwealth, the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) provides a variety of funding sources to support residential septic maintenance, repair and installation.

These DEQ programs include:

- Nonpoint Source Management Program
- Clean Water Financing and Assistance Program
- Chesapeake Bay Implementation Grant

The programs are administered by DEQ, but are carried out at the local level by Planning District Commissions, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, local governments and a variety of non-profits. These locally led programs include support from the Virginia Department of Health and the local health districts.



The DEQ Office of Watersheds and Local Government Assistance Programs' (OWLGAP) [Nonpoint Source Management](#) works with organizations and localities across Virginia to fund projects that correct failing septic systems or straight pipes. Most of these projects are part of larger watershed cleanup plans, which address agricultural and urban sources of pollution in addition to septic systems and straight pipes.

From July 1, 2020, to June 30, 2021, DEQ provided funding to pump out septic systems, repair or replace failing septic systems, or remove straight pipes from at least 442 homes, using \$1.2 million from federal grants, State Water Quality Improvement Act funding and landowner contributions. The grant funds were used in eleven river basins throughout Virginia.



DEQ also worked with 84 localities within Tidewater, overseeing the implementation of the [Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act](#) (Bay Act). One of the many requirements of the Bay Act is the pump out of on-site septic systems at least once every five years. In 2020, Bay Act localities reported that a total of 15,989 septic systems were pumped within Chesapeake Bay Preservation areas. From the spring of 2019 to March 2021, almost \$47,000 was directed to localities for the implementation of local septic pump out programs, which includes financial assistance, inspections as well as the development and distribution of educational material.

DEQ's [Clean Water Financing and Assistance Program](#) provides funding for localities to create and manage a revolving loan program for homeowners to repair or replace malfunctioning and failing septic systems. The program allows localities to provide low- to no-interest loans with flexible repayment terms to homeowners who would otherwise be unable to afford to address these problems. Some local governments have been able to combine this funding source with other grant programs to provide even better terms (including partial grants).

The septic work funded by DEQ and other partners has resulted in [water quality success stories](#) throughout Virginia. To continue this positive trend, DEQ participates in the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's SepticSmart Week campaign each year. Held the third week of September, the campaign highlights the importance of proper septic system maintenance for homeowners and businesses.

*For more information about DEQ's NPS projects click [here](#).*