

2021

MOU Partners' SepticSmart Week Social Media Guide



Prepared by Partners of EPA's Decentralized Wastewater MOU Partnership

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Decentralized Wastewater MOU Partners' SepticSmart Week Social Media Guide

How to Use this MOU Partnership Guide

Welcome! This SepticSmart Week Social Media Guide contains material and information your organization – a Decentralized Wastewater MOU Partner or affiliate of the Decentralized Program – can use to advertise and promote SepticSmart Week. In addition to the basic social media messages and outreach material, it includes tips and methods to track the information you share on your social media channels. You can copy these messages directly or customize them to reach your audience. Have fun and remember to be SepticSmart!

What You Should Know About SepticSmart Week

SepticSmart Week is an annual event focused on educating homeowners and communities on the proper care and maintenance of their septic systems. Groups from Federal, state, and local governments; the private sector; communities; and academia all participate in SepticSmart Week. You can participate too by sharing these social media messages, promoting the outreach information, and advertising SepticSmart Week.

SepticSmart Week Core Messages

- General
- Save You Money
- Safeguard Your Family's Health
- Protect the Environment
- Protect It & Inspect It! (Day 1)
- Think at the Sink! (Day 2)
- Don't Overload the Commode! (Day 3)
- Pump Your Tank! (Day 4)
- Don't Strain Your Drain! (Day 5)
- Shield Your Field! (Day 6)
- Keep It Clean! (Day 7)

These are the core messages to promote during SepticSmart week using the associated social media materials, videos, and images. The MOU Partners suggest focusing on one core message and one Quick Tip per day of SepticSmart Week. Core messages and Quick Tips are available in both English and Spanish and linked within this guide.

Know Your Audience

One of the first things to consider with social media is identifying the audience you are trying to reach. Are you targeting professionals? Pumpers? Installers? County public health officials? Individual homeowners? Tailor your social media messages so you provide your audience with relevant tips, facts, and resources get out the core messages of SepticSmart Week. We encourage social media posts to link to the EPA Septic website at epa.gov/septic. When sharing a link to media content such as the new

Quick Tip Videos, make sure the thumbnail to the video appears underneath the post. This makes viewing the video as simple as possible (and internal to the social media platform), as opposed to opening a new window to YouTube. For Twitter, tweets can be preloaded and posted at a determined date and time using the online tools (example: [Hootsuite](#)). For Facebook, posts can be scheduled for a date and time under posting options.

Social Media MOU Partners Can Use During SepticSmart Week

Hashtag

- Official hashtag: #SepticSmart; other hashtags to consider: #Wastewater, #CleanWater, #PollutionPrevention

Note: Hashtags are critical to engagement and evaluation. Think of a hashtag as a Google search term. If you or a similar organization want to follow a conversation, news, or content, the most efficient way to do that is through a hashtag. This feedback loop does two very important things: It increases the likelihood of sharing, liking, retweeting, etc., and it creates a permanent record of the activity. This documentation is important for evaluation of what type of engagement is occurring, and how it has changed from previous years.

Accounts

- Accounts to share or engage with: @EPAwater
- Partner Twitter Accounts: @ACWAWater, @ASTHO, @ASDWAorg, @CDCgov, @ECOSTates, @GWPCorg, @IAPMO, @NEHAorg, @NRWA, @NSF_Intl, @RCAPInc, @WEForg, @USWaterAlliance, @DigDeepH2O

Twitter Messages

- Remember, Twitter messages or “tweets” are 280 characters or fewer
- **General tweets to be used throughout the week**
 - DYK 1 in 5 U.S. homes have #septic systems? Properly maintaining your septic system can safeguard your family’s health, protect the environment, and save you money. Learn more at <https://www.epa.gov/septic>
 - **Costs:** #SepticSystems can be a cost-effective solution to treat #wastewater for homeowners in suburban and rural communities. Learn more at <https://www.epa.gov/septic>
 - **Public Health:** Proper use of #septic systems safeguards #publichealth by reducing the risk of harmful diseases and exposure of pathogens through drinking water. #CleanWater Learn more at <https://www.epa.gov/septic>
 - **The Environment:** #SepticSystems use gravity and natural filtration to treat #wastewater and replenish #groundwater supplies. #cleanwater. Learn more at <https://www.epa.gov/septic>
- **One week in advance (September 13, 2021)**
 - Do you have a septic system? Join us for #SepticSmart Week, Sept. 20-24! Learn how you can participate at <https://www.epa.gov/septic>

- DYK 1 in 5 U.S. homes have #septic systems? Properly maintaining your septic system can safeguard your family's health, protect the environment, and save you money. Learn more at <https://www.epa.gov/septic>
- [Save the Date](#) (PDF)
- **Four days in advance (September 16, 2021)**
 - Do Your Part. Get Septic Smart! Join us next week for #SepticSmart Week and learn septic system #QuickTips at <https://www.epa.gov/septic>
 - #SepticSystems treat small volumes of #wastewater from houses and businesses not served by a public #SewerSystem. Learn more at <https://www.epa.gov/septic>
 - [Save the Date](#) (PDF)
- **Day 1 / September 20, 2021 / Protect It and Inspect It!**
 - Today @EPAAwater is kicking off #SepticSmart Week! Look for our #QuickTips to stay #SepticSmart year-round <https://www.epa.gov/septic>
 - DYK 1 in 5 U.S. homes have #septic systems? Properly maintaining your septic system can safeguard your family's health, protect the environment, and save you money. Learn more at <https://www.epa.gov/septic>
 - #SepticSmart #QuickTip: Protect It and Inspect It! Regular #septic system maintenance can save homeowners money and protect #publichealth <https://www.epa.gov/septic>
 - TO POST on Twitter: [Protect It and Inspect It \(JPEG\)](#)
 - Video to share: [Protect It and Inspect It!](#) (YouTube)
- **Day 2 / September 21, 2021 / Think at the Sink!**
 - #SepticSmart #QuickTip: Think at the Sink! What goes down your drain has a big impact on your #septic system. Get the scoop on #SepticSmart maintenance by visiting [epa.gov/septic https://youtu.be/flWoB2QtBvY](https://youtu.be/flWoB2QtBvY)
 - TO POST on Twitter: [Think at the Sink \(JPEG\)](#)
 - Video to share: [Think at the Sink!](#) (YouTube)
- **Day 3 / September 22, 2021 / Don't Overload the Commode!**
 - #SepticSmart #QuickTip: Don't Overload the Commode! Know what should and shouldn't go in your toilet and stay #SepticSmart at [epa.gov/septic](https://www.epa.gov/septic) <https://youtu.be/mcYAubOSEvc>
 - TO POST on Twitter: [Don't Overload the Commode \(JPEG\)](#)
 - Video to share: [Don't Overload the Commode!](#) (YouTube)
- **Day 4 / September 23, 2021 / Pump Your Tank!**
 - #SepticSmart #QuickTip: Pump Your Tank! Get your #septic system pumped every 3-5 years to maintain its lifespan! Learn more at <https://www.epa.gov/septic> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-nXw5wsRJxY>
 - TO POST on Twitter: [Pump Your Tank \(JPEG\)](#)
 - Video to share: [Pump Your Tank!](#) (YouTube)

- **Day 5 / September 24, 2021 / Don't Strain Your Drain!**
 - #SepticSmart #QuickTip: Don't Strain Your Drain! The more water you conserve, the less ends up in your septic tank. Learn more at epa.gov/septic <https://youtu.be/om4mwk5VGN0>
 - TO POST on Twitter: [Don't Strain Your Drain \(JPEG\)](#)
 - Video to share: [Don't Strain Your Drain! \(YouTube\)](#)
- **Day 6 / September 25, 2021 / Shield Your Field!**
 - #SepticSmart #QuickTip: Shield Your Field! Protect the drainfield of your #septicssystem by keeping the field free of trees, plants, and heavy objects. Learn more at epa.gov/septic <https://youtu.be/Q4bTQ0PQiJA>
 - TO POST on Twitter: [Shield Your Field \(JPEG\)](#)
 - Video to share: [Shield Your Field! \(YouTube\)](#)
- **Day 7 / September 26, 2021 / Keep It Clean!**
 - #SepticSmart #QuickTip: Keep it Clean! Test your drinking water well to keep your family healthy #CleanWater. Learn more at epa.gov/septic https://youtu.be/Tz6wx8kmr_A
 - TO POST on Twitter: [Keep it Clean \(JPEG\)](#)
 - Video to share: [Keep it Clean! \(YouTube\)](#)

Facebook/ LinkedIn/ Instagram Posts

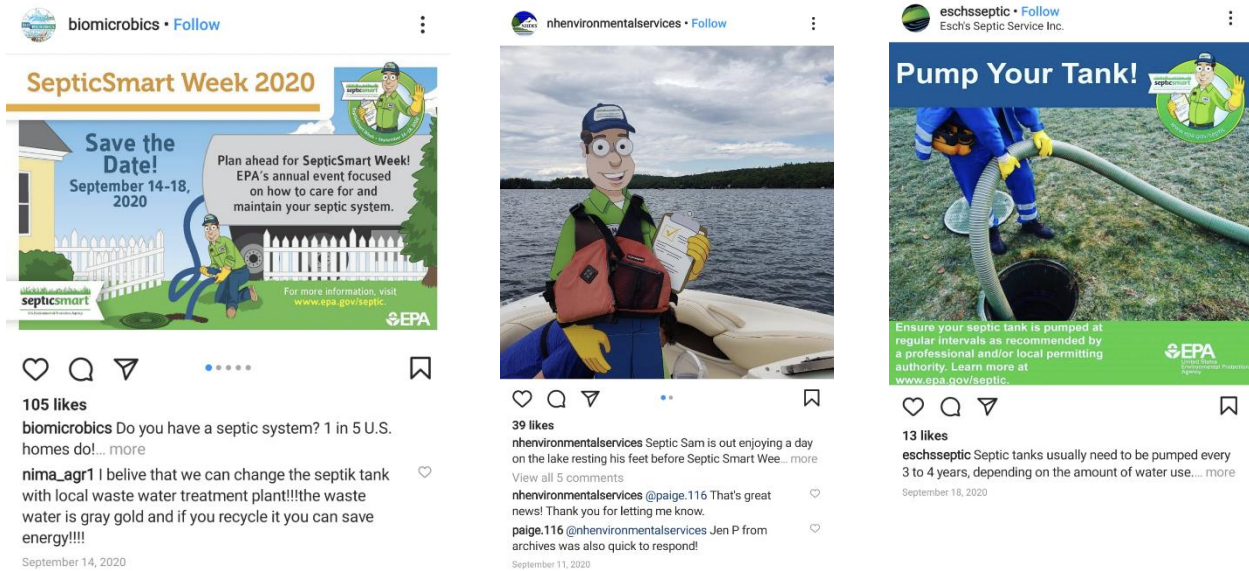
- **One week in advance: (September 13, 2021):**
 - Did you know one in five U.S. homes have septic systems? Yours may be one of them. Next week we are kicking off #SepticSmart Week to encourage homeowner education and awareness. Learn more about the public health, environmental, and economic benefits of a well-maintained septic system at www.epa.gov/septic
 - [Save the Date](#) (PDF)
- **Four days in advance: (September 16, 2021):**
 - Mark your calendars for the start of #SepticSmart Week, Sept. 20-24. Do Your Part. Get Septic Smart! <https://www.epa.gov/septic>
 - [Save the Date](#) (PDF)
- **Day 1 / September 20, 2021 / Protect It and Inspect It!**
 - Today we're kicking off #SepticSmart Week! This week we recognize the importance of properly caring for and maintaining your septic system. Check in every day for #SepticSmart Quick Tips and learn more at <https://www.epa.gov/septic>
 - Protect It and Inspect It! You can help protect the environment and public health by having your septic system regularly serviced every 1-3 years. Learn more about staying #SepticSmart at <https://www.epa.gov/septic>
 - TO POST on Facebook: [Protect It and Inspect It \(JPEG\)](#)
 - Video to share: [Protect It and Inspect It! \(YouTube\)](#)
- **Day 2 / September 21, 2021 / Think at the Sink!**

- Think at the Sink! Use water efficiently to maintain the life of your septic system. Limit the use of your garbage disposal and avoid rinsing coffee grounds or pouring grease into the sink. Get the scoop on how to stay #SepticSmart at <https://www.epa.gov/septic>
- TO POST on Facebook: [Think at the Sink \(JPEG\)](#)
- Video to share: [Think at the Sink!](#) (YouTube)
- **Day 3 / September 22, 2021 / Don't Overload the Commode!**
 - Don't Overload the Commode! Your toilet is not a trashcan, flushing non-degradable products can clog your system and cause sewage to back up into your home or flood your yard. Do not flush anything besides human waste and toilet paper. Read more #SepticSmart tips at <https://www.epa.gov/septic>
 - TO POST on Facebook: [Don't Overload the Commode \(JPEG\)](#)
 - Video to share: [Don't Overload the Commode!](#) (YouTube)
- **Day 4 / September 23, 2021 / Pump Your Tank!**
 - Pump Your Tank! Did you know a typical septic tank needs to be pumped every 3 – 5 years on average? Properly caring for a septic system can be challenging if you've never owned a septic system before. With Septic Sam's Top 10 List, learn easy tips to help prolong the life of your septic system. Check out our toolkit at <https://www.epa.gov/septic/septic-systems-outreach-toolkit>
 - TO POST on Facebook: [Pump Your Tank \(JPEG\)](#)
 - Video to share: [Pump Your Tank!](#) (YouTube)
- **Day 5 / September 24, 2021 / Don't Strain Your Drain!**
 - Don't Strain Your Drain! Putting the wrong items into your septic system can put the health of your family and neighbors at risk and result in expensive repairs for your system. Learn what should and should not go down your drain and stay #SepticSmart <https://www.epa.gov/septic>
 - TO POST on Facebook: [Don't Strain Your Drain \(JPEG\)](#)
 - Video to share: [Don't Strain Your Drain!](#) (YouTube)
- **Day 6 / September 25, 2021 / Shield Your Field!**
 - Shield Your Field! Love gardening? Your septic system does not! Be careful where you plant as roots can clog the stone and damage the pipes in your drainfield. Parking your car or placing heavy objects on top of your drainfield can also damage it. Learn how to shield your field and be #SepticSmart by visiting <https://www.epa.gov/septic>
 - TO POST on Facebook: [Shield Your Field \(JPEG\)](#)
 - Video to share: [Shield Your Field!](#) (YouTube)
- **Day 7 / September 26, 2021 / Keep It Clean!**
 - Keep it Clean! Properly maintaining your septic system helps to prevent contamination to your drinking water well. Test the cleanliness of your well water regularly to keep your family healthy. Learn more #SepticSmart tips at <https://www.epa.gov/septic>
 - TO POST on Facebook: [Keep it Clean \(JPEG\)](#)

- Video to share: [Keep it Clean!](#) (YouTube)

NEW! Instagram

Instagram is a social media platform that emphasizes photo and video sharing. Users can take, edit, and publish images and videos for followers to interact through likes, comments, and shares.



As of April 2021, Statista found that 31.5 percent of U.S. Instagram users were between 25 and 34 years old. This is an important demographic because they may be more likely to be new homeowners. Instagram is also optimized for mobile use. As seen in the examples, users can post images of Quick Tips and other EPA Decentralized Wastewater Program outreach materials. Users can also personalize their images of homeowners in their town or county, images of construction projects, or even Septic Sam out on a boat. Users can also upload videos from their devices. Note: The maximum video length is 1 minute.

For more information on how to use Instagram, visit this [Hootsuite walkthrough guide](#).

Website Homepages & Web Graphics

- Include the “Save-the-Date” flyer on the homepage of your website
 - [2021 SSW Save the Date Flyer](#) (PDF)
- Download the SepticSmart Week generic seal
 - [SepticSmart Week Seal](#)



Blogs

NEW! SepticSmart Week

National Environmental Health Association (NEHA)

EPA's SepticSmart Week will take place September 20-24, 2021. This event focuses on educating homeowners and communities on the proper care and maintenance of their septic systems. With over one in five households in the U.S. using septic systems, it's important to learn how homeowners can save money, protect their health, and preserve the environment by following EPA's SepticSmart Week tips and advice. The [National Environmental Health Association](#) also has a webpage devoted to septic system information and resources.

In recent years, climate change has threatened wastewater treatment systems. This means that due to sea level rise and increased precipitation, your household's septic system may become less effective at removing contaminants from wastewater and preventing surface water pollution.

Septic systems work by collecting wastewater from your toilet, sink, and shower, allowing the solids to settle at the bottom of the tank, and discharging the liquids to an area called a "drainfield" or "leachfield," where the wastewater filters through the soil before rejoining the groundwater below (U.S. EPA). However, rising sea levels and increased precipitation are causing groundwater tables to rise in some parts of the U.S., which reduces the distance travelled by the wastewater before it reaches the groundwater. This reduces the capacity of the filtering system (Mihaly, 2017). Additionally, rising temperatures and more frequent rain and snowfall deplete oxygen levels in soil. Oxygen is a necessary component for removing pathogens from wastewater as it filters through the drainfield, and reduced oxygen levels may reduce the effectiveness of this process (Mihaly, 2017). If the drainfield cannot properly filter your household's wastewater, pathogens and chemical pollutants could make their way into recreational or drinking water sources.

Flooding and storm surging exacerbated by climate change may also lead to septic tank overflows, which can cause wastewater to flood your home or yard and can contaminate surface water. Floods may also dislodge septic tanks from the ground, and disasters such as earthquakes and wildfires can damage tanks (NEHA). This is of especially high concern in areas with old, deteriorating septic system infrastructure.

Residential wastewater pollution can result in foul odors, closure of swimming areas, and loss of biodiversity and aquatic habitats. If your household uses a septic system and also gets its water from a private well, a malfunctioning septic system could result in wastewater contaminants leaching into your drinking water. The bacteria, parasites and viruses present in wastewater can cause meningitis, gastroenteritis, cholera, dysentery, hepatitis, and other illnesses (Chahal et al, 2016).

To reduce the risk of your septic system malfunctioning, it's important to properly care for your system. Regular septic system maintenance costs around \$250-\$300 per year – much less than the \$3,000-\$7,000 it costs to replace an entire system – and prevents your property value from depreciating. Proper maintenance also prevents contamination by disease-causing pathogens and chemical pollutants, protecting your health and the environment (U.S. EPA).

Household septic systems should be inspected at least once every three years by a licensed professional, and household tanks should be pumped every three to five years. How often you should get your tank

pumped depends on the size of your household, the volume of wastewater and waste solids generated, and the size of your septic tank (U.S. EPA).

On a daily basis, you can care for your septic system by using water efficiently. Using high-efficiency toilets, faucets, and showerheads and spreading washing machine use throughout the week can reduce the risk of your septic system failing. In addition, be sure to properly dispose of all household waste – do not flush anything besides human waste and toilet paper down the toilet, and avoid pouring chemical drain cleaners, oils, grease, or oil-based paints down your sink. In order to maintain your drainfield, never park, drive, plant trees, or place rainwater drainage systems in the drainfield area (U.S. EPA).

This SepticSmart Week, keep your septic system running smoothly and prevent wastewater from contaminating your drinking and swimming water. As sea levels and temperatures continue to rise, proper septic system maintenance is more crucial than ever to protect your own health and that of your community.

Chahal, C., van den Akker, B., Young, F., Franco, C., Blackbeard, J., & Monis, P. (2016). Pathogen and Particle Associations in Wastewater: Significance and Implications for Treatment and Disinfection Processes. Advances in applied microbiology, 97, 63–119.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/bs.aambs.2016.08.001>

Mihaly, E. (2017). Avoiding Septic Shock: How Climate Change Can Cause Septic System Failure and Whether New England States are Prepared. Conservation Law Foundation. Retrieved from https://www.clf.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Avoiding-Septic-Shock_CLF-White-Paper_2017.pdf

National Environmental Health Association, n.d. Preparedness & Response for Septic Systems. Retrieved from <https://www.neha.org/eh-topic/preparedness-response-septic-systems>

United States Environmental Protection Agency, n.d. Septic Systems. Retrieved from <https://www.epa.gov/septic>

NEW! Illinois-based Program Creates National Impact for Septic, Private Well Users

PrivateWellClass.org

It's hard for anyone to manage and value what they can't see.

Groundwater is often called our hidden resource. That's why it's critical to bring engaging and visual groundwater education to the 45 million septic system and private well users in the United States through U.S. EPA's SepticSmart Week (September 20-24, 2021) and other year-round activities.

A program based at the Illinois State Water Survey (ISWS) on the campus of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign leverages both in-person and online events to share expertise and increase public awareness of domestic water and wastewater issues.

Because improperly managed septic systems can be a source of contamination for drinking water supplies, program manager Steve Wilson frequently turns to [materials available through the SepticSmart program](#) to help raise awareness and communicate septic system best practices.

Day to day ISWS geologists, engineers, and hydrologists conduct applied research on groundwater and water quality topics as well as provide support to individuals who are searching for well and groundwater-related information or who have questions about local water quality issues.

This work extends far beyond the borders of Illinois. In addition to these roles, ISWS staff conduct nationwide outreach and education to private well owners and those with septic systems via the PrivateWellClass.org initiative.

A Model for Outreach and Education

ISWS staff participate in events that reach a wide range of stakeholders but have found live demonstrations using sand tank models to be most engaging. Imagine a fish tank filled with sand, gravel, and miniature wells, septic tanks, and houses. These models show how groundwater flows and gets contaminated as well as how septic systems function.

“When participants can see the dyed water flowing through the ground and reaching a well or stream, it has a dramatic effect, usually leading to lots of questions,” says Wilson.

Wilson also shares that ISWS staff find it particularly rewarding to work with school-age children. His staff typically attend the Illinois State Fair where “Conservation World” provides many hands-on booths for children and adults alike. In 2019, staff engaged with over 200 well owners during the 10-day fair and demonstrated shallow groundwater contamination to over 500 children.

The Clean Water Celebration is another opportunity for ISWS staff to introduce these important concepts to young minds. Held annually at the Peoria, IL civic center, the event brings together over 2,500 middle school children where we use our sand tank models, well components, and hand pump to provide a memorable hands-on experience.

Inspired by these efforts, the Rural Community Assistance Partnership (RCAP) purchased sand tank models for their field staff to use in outreach and education work across the country. RCAP is a national network of non-profit organizations working to provide technical assistance, training, resources, and support to rural communities across the United States, tribal lands, and U.S. territories.

PrivateWellClass.org

Funded in partnership with RCAP through a grant from U.S. EPA, PrivateWellClass.org is an online, multimedia initiative that annually reaches more than 27,000 homeowners and stakeholders who serve the domestic well and septic user.

The initiative includes regular webinars, interactive online educational sessions, on private well or septic system best practices. Wilson shared that the webinars are held for private well and septic system owners to “develop their understanding of system maintenance and water quality protection as well as ask specific questions.”

Industry-wide events have also helped PrivateWellClass.org to increase awareness of well and septic issues. The team participates in the National Ground Water Association’s Groundwater Awareness Week in March and, of course, SepticSmart Week in September. These events are extremely popular and feed on each participant’s efforts, especially through social media.

PrivateWellClass.org additionally offers resources to help concerned citizens and professionals alike to develop their knowledge of groundwater issues and better serve their local communities.

“Together we can protect public health and groundwater resources. It starts with education,” says Wilson.

Case Study: Exceptional Efforts to Increase Awareness of Septic Systems in Whatcom County, Washington

Located in the northwest of Washington State with the Canadian border to the north and the Salish Sea to the west, Whatcom County is known for their rich water-intensive resources such as their aquaculture of shellfish and agriculture of raspberries. Therefore, protecting waterbodies and watersheds have been a top priority.

With more than 28,000 total septic systems, including 20,000 septic systems on sensitive areas along the coast and on the Lake Whatcom watershed, the county worked with seven coordinating partners who represent local municipalities to undertake a multi-year innovative campaign. The goal was to dramatically increase awareness of septic systems and to encourage best management practices for homeowners, utilizing SepticSmart Week and Clean Water Week to amplify their message.

1. **Assessment:** The County utilized surveys and interviews to establish a baseline of the residents’ understanding of septic systems.
2. **Initiatives:** This step helped inform the creation of communications outreach such as a press release, postcards, social media posts, and radio ads. The County also hosted events such as homeowners workshops and a public viewing of the feature film Mr. Toilet, a documentary on global sanitation.
3. **Evaluation:** These efforts proved to have effectively increased awareness based on workshop attendance, responses from a follow-up survey, and increased website traffic.

In addition to the coordinated messaging approach, the County focused on leveraging federal, state, and local funding sources, and increasing water quality monitoring capacity. For more information about Whatcom County’s campaign, [visit](#) the County’s website.

How to Guide: Governor, Mayor, Leaders, and Local SepticSmart Week Proclamations

SepticSmart Week typically takes place on the third week of September every year. This annual event focuses on educating homeowners and communities on the proper care and maintenance of their septic systems, as well as protecting public health, the environment, and one’s property value. To make the most of SepticSmart Week, EPA and the Decentralized Wastewater MOU Partnership developed numerous outreach materials and resources, which are available at <https://www.epa.gov/septic/septic-systems-outreach-toolkit>.

The SepticSmart Week Proclamation is a popular resource available in the toolkit. This proclamation is a one-page declaration that shows support for SepticSmart Week. Proclamations can be issued by governors, mayors, local health or environment department leaders, MOU partner organization leaders, affiliate organization leaders, community organization leaders, and more. The proclamation templates

are customizable. We hope that proclamations can be issued at the start of SepticSmart Week; however, we will accept them anytime! The show of support is what matters most.

SepticSmart Week Proclamation Templates

- [SepticSmart Week Proclamation for Governors \(WORD\)](#)
- [SepticSmart Week Proclamation for Mayors \(WORD\)](#)
- [SepticSmart Week Proclamation for Leaders \(WORD\)](#)
- [SepticSmart Week Proclamation for Decentralized Wastewater MOU Partners \(WORD\)](#)

NEW! MOU Recognition Document

The SepticSmart Week Proclamation is the best tool for MOU partners to express their support for SepticSmart Week. However, for those partners who are unable to issue an organizational proclamation, we recommend posting the new MOU Recognition Document. The document, available in the outreach toolkit, is an alternative to the proclamation and does not require editing or signing. It includes a statement formally recognizing SepticSmart Week, the Decentralized Wastewater MOU Partnership logo, the SepticSmart Week logo, and the MOU Partnership logo block. The document is available in multiple formats and can be posted on your website or social media platforms. We encourage organizations with state affiliates to promote the recognition document as well.

SepticSmart Week MOU Recognition Document

- [Recognition Document \(WORD\)](#)
- [Recognition Document \(PDF\)](#)

Monthly Planning Guide to a SepticSmart Week Proclamation

MONTH	STEPS	IMPORTANT NOTES
May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin gathering information • Create a timeline 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start early!
June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify any established procedures around securing a proclamation • Ensure you have leadership support and make sure that is communicated in each step • Develop the wording for the proclamation (see EPA sample proclamations) • Draft memo from agency head to your state's 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Save email from your leadership approving initiative as your Governor's Office may ask for it • Make sure wording is short and to the point • Explain how it will benefit communities • Make sure the proclamation is in Microsoft Word for easy editing • Write the Governor's Proclamation yourself in plain text, without any formatting. This makes it easy for the Governor's Office to simply use your draft and add on their Governor Proclamation formatting

	appointed health official (i.e. Secretary of Health, Surgeon General, etc.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft memo from Health Official to Governor's Office 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check out examples of previous years' proclamations (https://www.epa.gov/septic/septicsmart-week-2017-proclamations)
July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enlist support from other state/local health departments Identify a point person in the process, whether at the State Health Department or Governor's Office that you can check in with 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keeping in touch will help you to know the status of your request and if there is anything missing that you need to submit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knowing this early on is important so that you do not run out of time to make corrections or additions Follow up with emails and phone calls Ensure memos are sent from agency head to health official
August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When you receive your proclamation, SHARE IT! Share it at local events, social media posts and news releases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proclamation gets posted on the governor's webpage, bringing more attention to your cause The proclamation adds more weight to your social media posts and increases the chance of it being picked up and shared across wider audiences
September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share! Share! Share! Measure your impact! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Metrics matter! As much as possible, identify the impact of your outreach activities. Connect with partners to measure impact <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are calls regarding septic system operation and maintenance increasing? Are local health departments seeing an increase in calls?

Other Tips and Ideas to Promote SepticSmart Week

- Take full advantage of the [materials](#) provided by EPA. These materials can be modified to fit your unique community regulations and needs. Your jurisdictional contact information can also be added.
- Nearly all EPA SepticSmart outreach materials have been translated into the Spanish language. We encourage users to utilize these materials when communicating to predominantly Spanish-speaking communities.
- Share information with other jurisdictions as early as possible so they can have time to add it to their outreach calendar.

- Create partnerships with industry to promote SepticSmart Week and share informational flyers. Some septic system service providers have offered a discount for services booked during SepticSmart Week creating a win-win situation. This works well in the Val-Pack coupon mailers.
- Bus ads and billboards can be used throughout the state and reach a lot of people.
- Reach out to other agencies for opportunities to share information. Some ideas include:
 - Highway signs or other “outdoor” advertising
 - Permitting/Inspection
- Look within the health department for other outlets:
 - Public Health Nurse home visits
 - Healthy home inspections
 - Restaurant inspections for establishments that rely on septic

Outreach Materials

- Quick tips, flyers, website graphics, postcards, brochures, mail inserts, guides, and door hangers can be found on [EPA's Septic Systems Outreach Toolkit](#)
- [The Do's and Don'ts of Your Septic System](#) – popular downloadable graphic

NEW! Quick Tip Videos

- Share videos for the following Quick Tips!
- Link for all videos: <https://www.epa.gov/septic/septicsmart-week-quick-tip-videos>, or individually:
 - [Think at the Sink!](#)
 - [Don't Strain Your Drain!](#)
 - [Keep it Clean!](#)
 - [Shield Your Field!](#)
 - [Don't Overload the Commode!](#)
 - [Pump Your Tank!](#)
 - [Protect It and Inspect It!](#)

Images and Graphics

- Use pictures to tell the story!
- Photos or images associated with each of the SepticSmart Week Quick Tips:
 - Think at the Sink! [English version](#) | [Spanish version](#)
 - Don't Strain Your Drain! [English version](#) | [Spanish version](#)
 - Keep It Clean! [English version](#) | [Spanish version](#)
 - Shield Your Field! [English version](#) | [Spanish version](#)
 - Protect It and Inspect It! [English version](#) | [Spanish version](#)
 - Don't Overload the Commode! [English version](#) | [Spanish version](#)
 - Pump Your Tank! [English version](#) | [Spanish version](#)
- Use the home infographic with core SepticSmart messages:
 - [Do Your Part Infographic](#)

TV Spots

- Local news stations, interviews, promoting SepticSmart Week
 - [WTAT News - South Carolina News Station](#)
 - 9-minute interview with local expert promoting awareness for SepticSmart Week in South Carolina (from 2017)

Press Releases, Public Service Announcements (PSAs) and Radio Advertisements

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: XXXXXXXXX

(XXX) XXX-XXXX

xxxxxxxxx@xxxx.com

EPA's Ninth Annual SepticSmart Week: *Safeguard Your Family's Health, Protect the Environment, and Save Money*

Washington, D.C. (Sept. X, 2021) — The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), supported by state and local governments, the private sector, communities, and academia, will sponsor its eighth SepticSmart Week 2021, Sept. 20-24, an annual event focused on educating homeowners and communities on the proper care and maintenance of their septic systems.

More than one-fifth of U.S. households utilize an individual onsite system or small community cluster septic system to treat their wastewater. These systems treat and dispose of relatively small volumes of wastewater and include a wide range of individual and cluster treatment options to process household and commercial sewage. These systems go by such names as septic, decentralized wastewater treatment, cluster, package plants, on-lot, individual sewage disposal, and private sewage.

Onsite systems provide a cost-effective, long-term option for treating wastewater, particularly in sparsely populated areas. When properly installed, operated, and maintained, these systems help protect public health, preserve valuable water resources, and maintain a community's economic vitality.

EPA's SepticSmart initiative is a nationwide public education effort offering educational resources to homeowners, local organizations, and government leaders to explain how septic systems work and provide tips on how to properly maintain them. Organizations and individuals wishing to promote SepticSmart Week 2021 are encouraged to create public awareness about the event and share helpful tips, such as:

- **Think at the Sink!:** What goes down the drain has a big impact on your septic system. Fats, grease, and solids can clog a system's pipes and drainfield.
- **Don't Overload the Commode!:** A toilet is not a trash can. Disposable diapers and wipes, feminine hygiene products, coffee grounds, cigarette butts, and cat litter can damage a septic system.
- **Don't Strain Your Drain!:** Use water efficiently and stagger use of water-based appliances. Too much water use at once can overload a system that hasn't been pumped recently.
- **Shield Your Field!:** Tree and shrub roots, cars, and livestock can damage your septic drainfield.
- **Keep It Clean!:** Contamination can occur when a septic system leaks due to improper maintenance. Be sure your drinking water is safe to drink by testing it regularly.
- **Protect It and Inspect It!:** Regular septic system maintenance can save homeowners thousands of dollars in repairs and protect public health.
- **Pump Your Tank!:** Ensure your septic tank is pumped at regularly intervals as recommended by a professional and/or local permitting authority.

SepticSmart Week 2021 encourages homeowners, wastewater professionals, and state, tribal, and local officials to design and maintain effective systems to safeguard your family's health, protect the environment, and save money. Be part of the solution by visiting www.epa.gov/septic for an abundance of resources and information.

Public Service Announcements (PSAs)

- Septic Sam says 'Save the Date'. SepticSmart Week is September 20th through the 24th. Each year EPA holds SepticSmart Week with outreach activities to encourage homeowners and communities to care for and maintain their septic systems. You wouldn't drink out of your toilet would you? That is why information about maintenance and care is so important to help keep our water resources and our environment clean and safe. Septic Sam says call xxx-xxx-xxxx to learn more or go to [insert agency website].
- Septic Sam says 'Do Your Part, Be SepticSmart'! Learn more about septic system care and maintenance during SepticSmart Week, September 20th through the 24th. Each year the EPA uses SepticSmart Week to reach out to homeowners and communities, to care for and maintain their septic systems. You wouldn't drink out of your toilet would you? That's why information about your septic system is vital in helping to prevent pollution and contamination of our environment and water resources. Call xxx-xxx-xxxx or go to [insert agency website].

Radio Ads

- If you're buying a home in [insert State] you might be purchasing a septic system as well. Septic systems are effective and easy to maintain, but failing systems are a major cause of water pollution and can be expensive to replace. Learn the warning signs including slowly draining sinks, and toilets, or sewage odors in the house or yard. Better yet, get a professional to inspect your system, determine the age of the system, and make sure that it is properly sized for your

current needs. Please check with local authorities for additional requirements in your area. This message is brought to you by [insert agency name].

- Out of sight and out of mind... Does that describe your relationship with your septic system? Proper maintenance of your septic system will affect how well it works, and, how long it lasts. And the most important part of maintenance is a regular inspection. Don't wait until there's a problem. Inspections will catch problems before they become serious and expensive to correct. The results can also suggest simple lifestyle changes such as conserving water. That will extend the life of your system. To learn more about your septic system, call your local [insert agency] office and request any materials designed especially for homeowners with septic systems. Protect your property, your family, and the environment, by getting to know your septic system. Please check with local authorities for additional requirements and recommendations in your area. This message is brought to you by [insert agency name].
- If you're like most homeowners, you don't think about what happens to things that go down the drain. But if you have a septic system, those things can come back to haunt you. Several things can damage your septic system and cause unpleasant and expensive problems. Don't use your toilet as a trashcan... unless you want those items back. Call [insert agency name] to learn more about your septic system before it's too late. Protect your property, your family, and your neighbors by getting to know your septic system. This message is brought to you by [insert agency name].

Talking Points for MOU Partners

- "SepticSmart Week is an important event in our community which reminds homeowners to maintain their septic systems. A well-managed septic system protects the health of the homeowner, as well as their neighbors and the community. Those who participate in SepticSmart Week should be commended."
- "SepticSmart Week is an important step in raising awareness about septic systems and maintenance in our community. This campaign brings community members together and fosters good stewardship. Septic maintenance helps the community avoid costly repairs, maintain home property values, and protect local water sources."
- "SepticSmart Week generates revenue for small businesses - septic installers, manufacturers and service providers. This small business growth supports local economies, jobs and families."
- "[Organization name] is proud to participate in SepticSmart Week 2021. Proper septic maintenance and care is essential to protecting the property, health, and environment of our community(ies). We hope that homeowners take a moment this week to schedule service they may have put off and follow septic maintenance best practices."

Personalize It!

- Some of the brochures, pamphlets, and postcards on www.epa.gov/septic have white space on the front page to place your business card or use with a mailing label
- Use these existing materials and add your own personalized mailing label or company logo.
 - [Homeowner's Brochure](#)
 - [Homebuyer's Guide](#)
 - [Spring Postcard](#)

COVID-19 and Wastewater Safety and Health Resources

**Due to the 2020/2021 COVID-19 Pandemic, below is a sample of resources from federal agencies and organizations involved in the MOU partnership.*

Coronavirus and Drinking Water and Wastewater

[Webpage](#) from EPA

There is no higher priority for EPA than protecting the health and safety of Americans. EPA is providing this important information about COVID-19 as it relates to drinking water and wastewater to provide clarity to the public. The COVID-19 virus has not been detected in drinking-water supplies. Based on current evidence, the risk to water supplies is low. Americans can continue to use and drink water from their tap as usual. EPA also encourages the public to help keep household plumbing and our nation's water infrastructure operating properly by only flushing toilet paper. Disinfecting wipes and other items should be disposed of in the trash, not the toilet.

EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler sent a letter to Governors in all 50 states, territories, tribes and Washington, DC, requesting that water and wastewater workers, as well as the manufacturers and suppliers who provide vital services and materials to the water sector, are considered essential workers and businesses by state authorities when enacting restrictions to curb the spread of COVID-19. Our critical water infrastructure and its operators ensure the safe supply of water to our homes and hospitals, and depend on treatment chemicals, laboratory supplies and related goods and materials. Read letters to local leaders from Administrator Wheeler about the importance of water and wastewater services.

The Agency has provided a template that states, tribes, localities, water utilities and technical assistance providers can use to provide documentation to workers that are considered essential: [Water Utility Template: COVID-19 Pandemic](#) or [Water Utility Template for Tribal Lands: COVID-19 Pandemic](#).

EPA also supports states and cities that have already taken proactive measures to ensure continued access to clean water for drinking and handwashing during the COVID- 19 pandemic. Many drinking water systems are discontinuing service cut-offs, restoring service to customers whose service was previously cut-off, and refraining from imposing penalties for nonpayment. EPA recommends widespread adoption of these practices, which provide critical support for public health.

Additional Information

- [Frequent questions related to coronavirus \(COVID-19\) and drinking water and wastewater](#)
- [Water utility resources for the COVID-19 pandemic](#)

- [Tribal water utility resources for the COVID-19 pandemic](#)

Information for Sanitation and Wastewater Workers on COVID-19

[Webpage](#) information from CDC

Recently, the virus that causes COVID-19 has been found in untreated wastewater. While data are limited, there is no information to date that anyone has become sick with COVID-19 because of exposure to wastewater.

Standard practices associated with wastewater treatment plant operations should be sufficient to protect wastewater workers from the virus that causes COVID-19. These standard practices can include engineering and administrative controls, hygiene precautions, specific safe work practices, and personal protective equipment (PPE) normally required when handling untreated wastewater. No additional COVID-19-specific protections are recommended for workers involved in wastewater management, including those at wastewater treatment facilities.

More Information

- [CDC: Guidance for reducing health risks to workers handling human waste or sewage](#)
- [CDC: Water and COVID FAQs](#)
- [CDC: Sanitation and Wastewater](#)
- [CDC: Waste Management](#)
- [Occupational Safety and Health Administration: COVID-19 Control and Prevention: Solid waste and wastewater management workers and employers](#)

NOWRA, Onsite Wastewater and the Coronavirus Outbreak

[Webpage](#) information from NOWRA

As the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak continues to escalate around the world and the US, NOWRA is providing up-to-date information to help you address the many ways this pandemic is affecting you and your organization. Please know that the safety of our members and the entire onsite wastewater community is our primary concern, but we also want to provide you with resources which will help you continue your business.

More Information

- [NOWRA Programs/Activities](#)
- [Federal Loan and Tax Relief Programs](#)
- [Your Business Operations](#)
- [Government Policies](#)

PSA on Use of Cleaning Wipes During COVID-19

[PSA](#) from Sara Heger, NOWRA

NPR's Here & Now host Jeremy Hobson talks to Sara Heger, a wastewater expert at the University of Minnesota, about one side-effect of the rise in household cleaning as a result of the coronavirus: More people are clogging wastewater treatment systems with many types of cleaning and disinfecting wipes.

NEW! EPA on Disinfection Wipes and COVID-19

EPA statement on disinfecting wipes during COVID-19

EPA urges Americans to only flush toilet paper. Disinfecting wipes and other items should be properly disposed of in the trash, not the toilet. These wipes and other items do not break down in sewer or septic systems and can damage your home's internal plumbing as well as local wastewater collection systems. As a result, flushing these wipes can clog your toilet and/or create sewage backups into your home or your neighborhood. Additionally, these wipes can cause significant damage to pipes, pumps, and other wastewater treatment equipment. Sewer backups can be a threat to public health and present a challenge to our water utilities by diverting resources away from the essential work being done to treat and manage our nation's wastewater. Disinfecting wipes, baby wipes, and paper towels should never be flushed.

Additional Resources

[Is it okay to flush disinfecting wipes?](#)

[Frequent Questions about Wastewater and Septic Systems and Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)

COVID-19 Guidance and Resources

[Webpage](#) information from WRF

With the COVID-19 pandemic spreading worldwide, The Water Research Foundation has been dedicated to keeping water sector professionals informed about this virus and any measures needed to protect both water sector workers and public health. WRF continues to gather key information from experts in the fields of infectious disease control, virology, water engineering, outbreak epidemiology, pandemic trends, and risk emergency response, and provide deliverables and learning opportunities to disseminate the latest information.

Evaluation

Evaluation is a critical component for understanding the success, reach, and impact of social media engagement. It helps identify the audience and whether the message has increased their awareness. Feedback can also be used to inform future decision-making.

Below is a list of quantitative and qualitative measurable actions the program can measure, track, and document to develop an evaluation summary.

Social Media (*See below for how to track your social media presence*)

- Total Reach and Impressions
- Total Likes and Shares

Other Engagement

- Survey participation
- Attendance of workshop or training
- Website traffic

Track Your Social Media Reach

- Keep track of your social media efforts so you can report out on who you reached. As an MOU partner, it is extremely helpful for all of us to know the extent of our individual and collective efforts to send the SepticSmart message.
- Free social media trackers are available to identify audience, reach, and how well a message is received (a few examples below). Then you can report back to the other partners with your results!
 - [Google Analytics](#)
 - Tracks user activity on your website in real-time, such as: daily site visits, demographics of users, how they reached your site, how long they stay on your site, and which parts of your website are most and least popular.
 - [Hootsuite](#)
 - Measures social media ROI from all platforms in one place. The [free](#) version allows for 1 user and 3 social media platforms). A free 30-day [trial](#) for some advanced features is also available.
 - [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) Insights
- Metrics:
 - First identify your “Call to Action.” Are you trying to get people to go to your website? Are you trying to get people to share your post?
 - Second, identify the appropriate metric to use based on your call to action:
 - Measuring awareness: how far is your message spreading (volume, reach, exposure, amplification)
 - Measuring engagement: how many people are participating, how often and in what forms are they participating (likes, retweets, comments, replies, and participants)
 - Measuring traffic: are people moving through social media to your external site, and what do they do on your site (track URL shares, clicks, and conversions)
 - Third, analyze the buzz you are creating.
 - Use the tools above or generic tools such as:
 - [Social Mention](#): real-time social media search and analysis that tracks user sentiment, top keywords and users, hashtags, and sources of your search word. Type in a word, such as “[septic system](#)” to search its mention online

Twitter Examples from 2020





Promotional Article Examples from 2020

- “[SepticSmart Week Is Here](#)” from the University of Georgia College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences.

Image Examples from MI EGLE from 2019

- The below images are from **Dave Cotton**, and **Dale Ladouceur**, Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) Onsite Wastewater Program

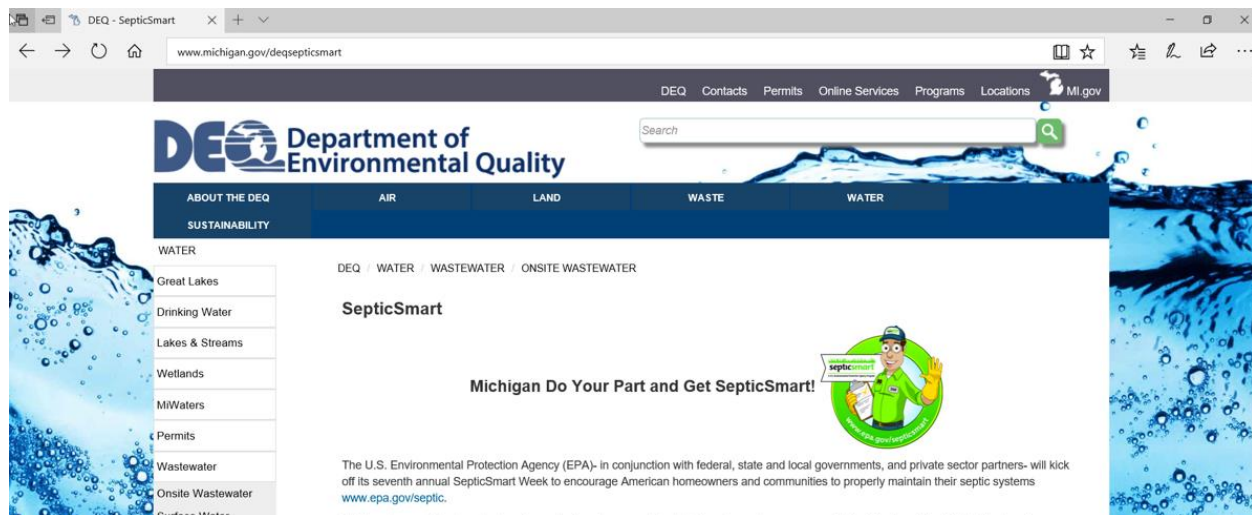


Image: Advertising on state DEQ website



Image: Presentations across the state educating those on what it means to be SepticSmart (pictured – Dave Cotton holding hands-on training on septic systems)



Image: Printed flyers and promotional material



Image: Promotional stickers



Image: SepticSmart "certified" stamp