

## Clean water is important to all of us!

What we do in our homes and businesses directly impacts our water and beaches.  
This is especially important for us that live in Southwest Michigan!



### Why do Lake Michigan beaches close?

Residents and tourists alike enjoy playing and swimming at our Lake Michigan beaches, but we shouldn't take this for granted. **Our water is at risk!** Wastewater containing bacteria and pathogens, such as E. coli, can make its way into Lake Michigan!

### Where does contamination come from?

Communities along the lakeshore and further upstream can have a direct impact on water quality. In Southwest Michigan we live in an area that drains directly into Lake Michigan. Any leaking waste from our communities eventually makes its way into Lake Michigan.

### What needs to be fixed?

The causes are failing septic systems and wastewater infrastructure. Most infrastructure is 50–100 years old and in need of repair and proactive maintenance. Both are leaking wastewater into streams and waterways.

### Let's follow the water's path...

From your home or businesses, it is critical that our septic and sewer systems don't seep or leak into the ground.

This whole area drains into Lake Michigan, emphasizing that what happens on the land and around our homes impacts the quality of Lake Michigan water.

E. coli is an **invisible bacteria** which comes from untreated wastewater and can make water unsafe for recreation and use.



## Help solve Southwest Michigan's wastewater infrastructure problems.

IMPROVE & MAINTAIN systems now, PROTECT clean water long term.



### HOMEOWNERS & BUSINESSES ON SEPTIC SYSTEMS

- + Adopt "Septic Best Practices" to reduce system stress  
Visit [betterbeachesswmi.org](http://betterbeachesswmi.org)
- + Repair/Replace/Maintain septic system
- + Learn where water flows from your property



### HOMEOWNERS & BUSINESSES ON SEWER SYSTEMS/CITY INFRASTRUCTURE

- + Adopt "Sewer Best Practices" to reduce system stress  
Visit [betterbeachesswmi.org](http://betterbeachesswmi.org)
- + Implement "Urban Water Management Practices"  
Visit [sustainoxcreek.org/improve](http://sustainoxcreek.org/improve)
- + Get involved in local government forums
- + Support bills/millages to improve and maintain infrastructure



### PROPERTY OWNERS ALONG WATERWAYS & WETLANDS

- + Add or maintain plantings along banks to avoid erosion
- + Restore and protect wetlands
- + Learn where water flows from your property

### GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS & DRAIN COMMISSION

- + Replace failing wastewater collection system infrastructure
- + Identify and correct illegal dumping or connections
- + Identify and correct failing septic systems
- + Enact a septic inspection time of sale ordinance
- + Enact/improve water quality protection related ordinances
- + Improve zoning maps to locate intensive uses appropriately
- + Protect conservation lands and wetlands
- + Maintain buffer areas, stream banks, and wetlands

### OUR PARTNERS



Stevensville Village, Lincoln Township, Lake Township, Bridgman City, Chikaming Township, New Buffalo Township, New Buffalo City, Grand Beach Village, Michiana Village

## SEWER & SEPTIC BEST PRACTICES For Homeowners and Businesses

Simple changes today can impact the future health of our water and beaches,

### CONSERVE WATER!

Use water efficiently to reduce system stress. When heavy water use and rain bring in more than systems can handle, this directly causes overflow that carries contamination.

**Did you know** that the average indoor water use in a typical single-family home is *nearly 70 gallons per individual, per day*. All of the water a household sends down its pipes winds up in its municipal sewer system or septic system. The more water a household conserves, the less water enters these systems.

- ✓ **Install high-efficiency toilets**  
Toilets accounts for 25–30% of household water use! Older toilets can use 2–3 times as much water per flush.
- ✓ **Install faucet aerators & high-efficiency showerheads**
- ✓ **Use clothes and dish washing machines smartly**
  - + Adjust water to load size, run full loads
  - + Spread washing over the week
  - + Wash with an ENERGY STAR rated appliance



### IF YOU ARE ON A SEWER SYSTEM, KNOW WHERE THE WATER IS GOING!

Rainwater and wastewater are meant to go to different systems.

- ✓ **Disconnect Illegal Connections to Sanitary Sewer Systems**  
Roof drains, sump pumps, and foundation drains illegally connected to the sanitary sewer system sends groundwater to the sewer treatment plant, consuming expensive wastewater treatment capacity.
- ✓ **Report Illegal Dumping to Storm Sewer Systems**  
Never dump anything down a storm drain as these usually go directly to a stream or wetland area.  
  
Contact the Berrien County Health Department, or the state's 24/7 hotline at 800-292-4706.

### DISPOSE OF WASTES PROPERLY!

Be mindful of what you put down the toilets, sink and shower drains.

Whether you flush it down the toilet, grind it in the garbage disposal, or pour it down the sink, shower, or bath, everything that goes down your drains ends up in your wastewater system, and can compromise the septic or sewer system.

- ✓ **Only flush human waste and toilet paper...**  
Put wipes, feminine products, and diapers, in garbage.
- ✓ **Instead of flushing past dated pharmaceuticals...**  
Take them to a collection center or recycling event, or the closest participating pharmacy.
- ✓ **Instead of chemical drain openers...**  
Use enzyme-based, septic-safe drain openers.
- ✓ **Instead of using a garbage disposal...**  
Scrape any food scraps into garbage (or better yet, compost).
- ✓ **Instead of pouring cooking oil or grease down drains...**  
Cool, pour into a non-breakable container, then throw away.
- ✓ **Instead of pouring chemicals and paint down drains...**  
Stir clay cat litter into any cans of latex paint until thickened, then throw away. Oil-based paints are considered hazardous waste and must be taken to a recycling center.



### IF YOU ARE ON A SEPTIC SYSTEM, INSPECT AND MAINTAIN IT

Septic system replacement can be very costly, but regular maintenance is inexpensive and only requires a call.

- ✓ **Regular System Inspection**  
Contact a professional to inspect at least every 3 years.
- ✓ **Regular System Pumping**  
Your septic tank should typically be professionally pumped every 3 to 5 years.

#### OUR PARTNERS

