

WPCA Update

The first contract of the Wastewater Management District's (WWMD) in Saybrook Acres is nearing completion having temporarily stalled with the addition of 2 emergency repairs. The WPCA has also elected to retest some of the properties to verify the soil testing data upon discovering a few discrepancies. Some soils are a challenge to decipher and a soil scientist was called in. The soil scientist confirmed that the depth to groundwater was deeper than perceived, which means less expensive leaching products could be installed.

This discovery impacts the next contracts, SA2 and SA3, in that the WPCA needs to retest the soils and redesign the septic systems for some of the properties to save the homeowners and program money.

Although the SA1 construction went well and restoration looks good, the contractors hit a few snags. A buried (fortunately empty) propane tank was discovered along with additional unexpected septic system components. This not only delayed the work but added change orders, which increases the time and cost of the installation. The solution to eliminating these surprises was the purchase of Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) equipment. This device which is the size of a lawn mower, enables the WPCA Inspectors to locate underground pipes, power lines, tanks, and septic systems that may be missed. It is anticipated to save thousands of dollars in change orders and enhance the safety on the construction sites. So the GPR will be employed with the mini excavator in the site investigation process. Note: The excavator is also available to provide free test hole digging service for soil testing outside of the WWMD.

WWMD Site Investigation: Who, What, Why and How?

The site investigation process is conducted by WPCA Inspectors (licensed installers, Phase I and Phase II Subsurface Wastewater certified), Registered Sanitarians from the CT River Area Health District, and soil scientists and surveyors (when necessary.)

Before coming onto the property, appointments are made with the residents, although they do not need to be present for the exterior investigations. Inspectors will walk the property with the GPR to locate and identify utilities, unexpected objects, and septic system components. These are not part of the Call Before You Dig program which only marks major utilities like; gas, water, electric, and cable service.

The interior inspection includes photographing the electrical panel and house sewer outlet (leading to the septic tank), usually located in the basement. The electrical panel will indicate whether or not there is any space for an additional line to run a septic pump if deemed required. The photo of the house sewer will indicate where the pipe goes to the tank and the height in case it needs to be raised. Raising the outlet can eliminate the need for a pump and save the homeowner money. It is sometimes necessary to confirm the number of bedrooms to determine the flow for system design. The external photographs are to show the property features for system placement and restoration purposes.

The soil test team uses the mini excavator to dig a “deep test pit” in order to establish the depth to groundwater and other “restrictive layers” which determine the placement and type of leaching products chosen. A percolation (perc) test using a post hole digger is also done for the sanitarian’s leaching system formulas. When the testing is finished the WPCA staff will fill the holes and add grass seed and hay. The team will also take elevations at the house and on the property for proper system siting. All this information will go into the plans and criteria to enable the installer or engineer to draw the septic system design.

When the plan is complete it is placed in each resident’s “Upgrade Package” for them to meet and review it with the Site Manager. The WPCA is flexible in working with the homeowner in what will be done and when and where on their property.

Next Year will see the continuation of soil testing and site investigation for Cornfield Park along with construction of Phase I (Saybrook Acres, Oyster River East, and Saybrook Point.) The WPCA will be planning for Phase II and the next Clean Water Fund application.

Finally, the Advanced Treatment System Selection Panel will convene to make the determination of the 3-4 systems for the water proximity properties in the first phase.

The WPCA would like to thank all the residents for their cooperation and helping to make our programs run smoothly. It has been a pleasure for the WPCA staff and Commission to meet and work with you. Please don’t hesitate to call, visit us in Town Hall, and view our website www.oswpca.org.

We wish you a very happy healthy holiday season and all the best in the New Year!