
ENVIRONMENTAL Fact Sheet



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Septage Land Application Sites New Hampshire

What is Septage?

The New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) Administrative Rules Env-Wq 1602.32 defines septage as: “the material removed from septic tanks, cesspools, holding tanks, or other sewage treatment storage units, excluding sewage sludge from public treatment works and industrial waste and any other sludge.” Septage also includes solids and other material removed from septage lagoons, waste from portable toilet and Type III marine sanitation devices, and grease interceptor waste that has been co-mingled with wastewater. Domestic septage is further defined to be liquid or solid material that comes only from a domestic source. Domestic septage does not include liquid or solid material removed from a septic tank, cesspool, or similar treatment works that receives either commercial or industrial wastewater and does not include grease removed from a grease trap.

Only domestic septage, excluding portable toilet and marine sanitation device waste, shall be land applied.

Why permit land application of septage?

As New Hampshire’s population increases, so does the need to develop solutions for septage management. More than 1 in 5 households in the United States depend on individual septic systems; in New Hampshire about ½ of all homes are served by individual systems. Septage haulers must find treatment facilities willing to accept septage. Many municipal wastewater treatment facilities (WWTFs) have a difficult time processing this septage because they have limited capacity to handle it. In some instances, septage haulers must travel great distances to discharge their loads, which leads to higher costs for the property owner.

What is a septage land application site?

A septage land application site is “a continuous land area owned by the same person on which septage is land applied, even if the land area is divided by a highway, rail bed, water body or boundary of a political subdivision.” A typical *septage land application site* allows the land application of domestic septage only when it is a **beneficial use** for agricultural purposes. Beneficial use is where the nutrient content and soil conditioning properties, or both, of the septage supply agronomic and soil conditioning benefits such as nitrogen, phosphorus, micronutrients, and/or organic matter, for a crop, forested land, or a nursery. This land application of septage must be performed at agronomic rates (not in excess of annual plant/crop nutrient requirements) to protect human health and the environment.

How do I obtain a permit?

People wishing to manage septage outside of a regulated location such as WWTFs, solid waste facilities or groundwater management facilities, must first obtain a site, facility, transfer/storage permit, or septage holding tank permit-by-notification approval, issued in accordance with Env-Wq 1603.01.

The person or entity proposing to land apply septage at a site shall apply for and be granted approval for a *Septage Site Permit* through NHDES' Wastewater Engineering Bureau, prior to land applying. The permit process requires the applicant to develop a site plan and evaluate the site for suitability, including determining: existing soils characteristics; proximity to surface waters, threatened or endangered species, proximity to designated rivers, groundwater protection areas, and other sensitive resources and surrounding land uses, etc.

The applicant must also provide a Septage Site Management Plan. This plan needs to include: the proposed method of application; treatment, stockpiling and storage provisions for the material; The area within the setbacks where septage can be spread; the volume of septage proposed to be land applied; an odor control plan; a site nutrient management plan per the recommendations of a certified advisor; and agronomic rate calculations.

If a *Septage Site Permit* is granted by NHDES, the permit holder must adhere to very specific federal and state regulations and standards, any local regulations or ordinances, best management practices, and permit conditions that protect human health and the environment. The permittee is also subject to annual testing and reporting requirements.

How do I obtain additional information?

Additional information related to septage and sludge can be found at the [NHDES Wastewater Engineering Residuals Management](#) page, including the [Septage Management Rules, Env-Wq 1600](#) and the [Septage Site Land Application Form](#). You may also contact us via email at: SludgeandSeptage@des.nh.gov.