

**MALEHA Environmental Health Forum**  
**MPHI, 2436 Woodlake Dr. Okemos**  
**November 16, 2017**

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Rod McNeill, Ingham

Liz Braddock, Mid-Michigan

Jeff Croll, Muskegon TC

Pat Jacuzzo, Marquette TC

Chuck Lichon, DHD #2 TC

Kevin Green, Calhoun

Matt Bolang, Livingston

Tip MacGuire, Huron Tuscola

Sara Simmonds, Kent TC

Lynne Madison, Western UP TC

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**Guests:** (TC = teleconference)

Orlando Todd, MDHHS

Jeremy Hoeh, MDEQ

Meghan Swain, MALPH TC

Sean Dunleavy, MDARD

Dana DeBruyn, MDEQ

Mark Miller, Miller Innovation Services

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1. **Call to Order:** Meeting called to order by Vern Johnson at 9:30am
  2. **Approval of Agenda:** Motion to approve by Matt Bolang, support by Chris Klawuhn. Motion carried.
  3. **Approval of September 22, 2017 Minutes:** Motion to approve by Chris Klawuhn, support by Tony Drautz. Motion carried.
  4. **Officer & Affiliate Reports**
    - a. **President's Report**

See attached.
    - b. **Treasurer's Report**

Motion by Matt Bolang, support by Tip MacGuire to approve November Treasurer's Report.  
Motion carried.
    - c. **MALPH** – Meghan Swain

The budget for fiscal year 2019 is not looking good. There is a budget shortfall, and there are concerns with what programs might be cut/reduced. One item that the legislature will be considering is elimination of auto no fault.

PFAS Governor's announcement was released this week. There is information available on the state website. There is additional information for review on the MALPH website.

MALPH website has been changed and there is a sign-in page. MALEHA members should be able to login to view items. The goal is to start building a library in the secure environmental health section of the website.

EH is encouraged to submit RFPs for the Michigan Premier Health Conference. This will help to increase the number of EH topics available at the conference.

MALPH Board is looking for feedback on a few EH items: Medical Waste Program, Statewide Sanitary Code, EPA audit findings, and a proposal regarding regulation of lead in restaurants.

d. **MEHA**—Sara Simmonds

MEHA Conference 2018 save the date flyer has been sent out. The 2018 conference will be held March 21-23, 2018. The Board is working on updating bylaws to allow for electronic voting for open positions. There is a need for a social media chair, if interested, please contact a Board member. MEHA Award applications are currently being accepted. Submit all nominations to Al Hauck.

5. **State Department Reports**

a. **MDHHS** – Orlando Todd

Hepatitis A outbreak occurring in southeast Michigan is currently ongoing. Additional funding has been requested from the legislature, but has not yet been approved. Funding and additional response/dispersal should be determined soon and updates provided to LHDs. There have been numerous phone calls coming in regarding the outbreak, and the state is working to evaluate the process to provide efficient and appropriate response to callers.

b. **DEQ**

Jeremy Hoeh

DEQ has been working on providing guidance and information regarding Hep A to septage haulers and portable toilet operators.

2017 Campground inspection reimbursement reports went out to LHDs this week.

Interpretation has been requested from the AG's office regarding administrative rule 35 in the campground program (swimming pools and bathing beach requirements at campgrounds). Once received, guidance and information will be shared with LHDs.

There are five septage haulers that will not have licenses renewed due to unpaid fees or enforcement action. This list will be shared with LHDs soon.

Septic update—Representative Lower has an interest in working on a statewide septage code due to bathing beach issues in his jurisdiction. DEQ will work with MALEHA to develop a draft document based on previous stakeholder feedback. Once draft is completed it will be shared with stakeholders to request input.

Accreditation and self-assessment process for Cycle 7. A new memo will be shared with LHDs. Self-assessment process will continue in Cycle 7. Those who wish to drop out of the self-assessment, there will be additional details to come. DEQ is waiting for recommendations and response from MDHHS regarding this process. A workgroup will likely be formed to continue to discuss this issue for Cycle 8 Accreditation.

Dana DeBruyn

Local health department grants/contracts have been sent. Contact Dana if you have not received it.

Information meeting Nov. 29, 2017 at the Lansing Center regarding the lead and copper rule.

Geothermal stakeholder meeting was recently held. There was support for legislation/oversight of geothermal wells. DEQ will continue to work on this item.

DEQ has been hosting trainings on well construction and sewage disposal systems. There are more well construction trainings scheduled, please see the schedule shared via the listserv.

Tony—any updates regarding the regulation of Type 2 supplies, specifically Hospitals with treatment on Type 1 supplies being classified as Type 2 facilities? Dana stated that there will be meetings soon to determine how these will be handled, at this time LHDs are not involved in the workgroup. Tony expressed concerns regarding the potential of classifying these as Type 2's would significantly increase the Type 2 inventory of LHDs. It is difficult for DEQ to support this program due to lack resources and funding to properly administer it. There have discussions between state departments to determine responsibilities and funding of this program. Dana can provide an update at the December meeting.

c. **Cross Jurisdictional Sharing Presentation**—Mark Miller

See attached handout for overview.

Mark would like a representative of MALEHA appointed to participate in this project, it would be helpful if they were a newer director to help provide insights into new director needs.

This will be discussed and determined, and Vern will provide the MALEHA representative information to Mark.

d. **MDARD**—Sean Dunleavy

Fairs—presentation has been completed and is under review. They are anticipating moving ahead with expansion of the program in 2018.

FSMA Bill—still pending signatures for approval.

Food Law/Food Code Update—on hold, waiting for the new food code to be released from the FDA.

Media training will be held Dec. 14, 2017 training at Treetops Resort in Gaylord (shared via listserv). If this training is desired in 2018, please provide feedback to Sean.

Meet up & Eat up Program—recommends follow-up by the food committee before the 2018 summer feeding program begins.

Medical marijuana licensing board—Sean will be the MDARD representative on this committee. The group has not yet met, but updates will be provided at future MALEHA meetings.

EAP Booklets have been reprinted. Information was shared with Standardized Trainers regarding more copies of the booklets. It will be shared via the listserv. Regina suggested that for future reprints, no contact advisory information be added regarding water supplies (example given was surface water and fire retardant being introduced in the water supply). Updates/edits to the EAP booklets is a suggested future item for the Food Committee to work on.

6. **Committee Reports**

a. **Food Committee**—Liz Braddock

- i. There has been an initial call with the Food Committee. MDARD is looking to get a resource guide together for agriculture wells. As MALEHA is not able to act as a

fiduciary for this it has been assigned to MPH. A recommendation was made to follow-up with MPH to request MALEHA participation on this project.

ii. Culture of Food Safety Training—John Tilden request

This has been assigned to members of the food committee to work on this committee (Amy Aumock-Livingston, Brandon Morill-NW).

iii. Northern Health Departments

Working on a fish consumption advisory to appear on menus in northern lower counties (regarding chemicals that could be present in fresh caught fish). Recommendations will be brought back to MALEHA.

Sean—this items was brought up to the Conference on Food Protection and it was not supported. The vote at the time was that there is significant information available via other sources.

iv. Future Meetings

Future meetings will be held the second Friday of the month when the Food Committee has pending assigned tasks. This could be either in person or via teleconference. Information will be shared with committee members.

**b. Water Committee**

i. Closed Loop Geothermal Wells

Tip attended the stakeholder meeting on November 13, 2017. Those in attendance seemed supportive of legislation/regulation for geothermal wells.

ii. GAAMP Concerns & Comments

Concerns regarding cross contamination regarding pesticides, fertilizer, generators (gas) and water should be addressed. There was general discussion regarding public health/contamination concerns and how MALEHA will provide these concerns to the GAAMP Committee.

GAAMP Public Comment specific to manure storage due November 29, 2017.

Tip to follow-up with Andy LaBarron to determine when comments regarding irrigation wells can be provide.

**c. Onsite & Land Use--no updates at this time.**

**d. Legislative**

i. House Bill 4978—School Health Bill

Update provided via the listserv.

**e. Technology & Training—Don Hayduk**

i. Information and presentations from the 2017 Director's Conference will be shared via the MALPH website.

**f. Vapor Intrusion Ad-hoc—Don Hayduk**

i. Meeting was held recently. There is continued work to create a tool box for LHDs to utilize when responding to these issues. Once complete, it will be shared with LHDs. Goal is to improve communication and response. Timeline for completion is approximately six months.

**7. MALEHA Member Reports (non-MALEHA Committee)**

a. **Medical Waste Pilot Program**

- i. MALPH Board has requested program recommendations from MALEHA. Vern voiced concerns that, depending on the numbers of licensed facilities in each county, reimbursement rates will likely not support additional staffing for the program. This would require absorption of the program with current staffing levels. Counties currently participating in the pilot program have utilized existing staffing to complete inspections. Costs to travel to facilities, time spent educating while at facility, and administrative issues act to increase costs to administer program. Vern will work on summarizing concerns will provide it to MALPH.

b. **DEQ Statewide Septic Code Workgroup**

- i. Currently awaiting creation of an updated draft. See notes above under DEQ update. Vern reiterated the necessity for MALEHA to participate in future stakeholder meetings on this issue. Tom Fountain expressed concerns with continued press on contamination caused by malfunctioning sewage systems and the inference that LHDs are not competently permitting and inspecting systems. A link to a recent Bridge article was shared via listserv. There was general discussion regarding MALEHA's role and what minimum requirements might look like.

8. **New Business**

a. EPA Michigan Program Report on Community & Non-Community Water Supplies

Vern said key points stated throughout the audit were lack of resources, staffing, and technology within the DEQ program. A report from MALEHA back to MALPH will reiterate these points.

b. MDARD Ag. Mgmt Practices (GAAMP) Public Comments (due Nov. 29)

See notes under Water Committee

c. Point of Sale/TOST Program Questions from MDHHS

A survey was sent from MDHHS via the listserv requesting information regarding county time of sale programs. Vern has requested a copy of the completed survey be provided.

9. **Items from Board**

- a. Chris Westover—EH Director's conference has a few pending payments. Approximately \$2,500 was the net profit from the conference.

10. **Items from Members**

- a. Regina Young—Harmful Algal Bloom (HAB) workgroup-is there a MALEHA representative? This item will be discussed at the MALEHA Board meeting later today. Workgroup purpose is to improve communication between agencies and clarify roles. Chris Westover has volunteered to participate.

Update on DEQ Restrictive Covenant workgroup? Committee has not been active, but Matt Bolang will follow-up to find status of this item.

11. **Future Agenda/Items**

- a. State Lab attend future meeting to answer questions about thermal control.
- b. Responsibility to inspect/regulate hospital facilities with treatment on water supplies. How classified? Who is responsible? How will it be funded?

Motion by Matt Bolang, support by Chris Westover to adjourn. Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 11:58am

**Submitted by:**

**Adeline Hambley 12/18/17**

**Approved x-xx-2017**

\_\_\_\_\_, MALEHA Secretary

DRAFT



# Michigan Association of Local Environmental Health Administrators MALEHA

*Representing Local Environmental Public Health Departments in Michigan*

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## Treasurer's Report

### November 2017

|                                                                     |             |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| Starting Checking Balance<br>(as of October 19, 2017)               | \$11,128.17 |
| Expenses                                                            |             |
| Description                                                         | Amount      |
| R.A.M. Center Fees                                                  | \$9,097.00  |
| October MPH Room Rental                                             | \$172.30    |
| R.A.M. Refund                                                       | \$335.00    |
| R.A.M. Refund                                                       | \$30.00     |
| R.A.M. Awards                                                       | \$396.84    |
| R.A.M. Snacks                                                       | \$163.56    |
|                                                                     |             |
| Total Expenses                                                      |             |
| Revenue                                                             |             |
| Description                                                         | Amount      |
| R.A.M. Registration Fees                                            | \$13,390.00 |
|                                                                     |             |
| Total Revenue                                                       |             |
| Current Adjusted Balance Checking Acct<br>(as of November 16, 2017) | \$14,323.47 |

## NOTES

Submitted by:  
Chris Westover, 11-16-17

Approved:

## **Cross Jurisdictional Sharing Project: Enhanced Training for Senior Public Health Professionals**

MALPH and other public health partners will conduct a Cross Jurisdictional Sharing Project for FY2018, utilizing resources from MDHHS. The project will support training for new public health leadership, including local health officers, deputy health officers, and medical directors, as well as directors of nursing, finance, emergency preparedness, environmental health and health education.

### **Major Components**

#### **Comprehensive Training Needs Analysis**

Using existing guidance, as well as information gleaned from MALPH Forums and a Project Workgroup\*, training priorities for public health leadership will be identified. One-day training sessions will be developed and conducted during the summer of 2018.

#### **Michigan Manual for Local Public Health Leaders**

Pertinent materials, especially those needed by new public health leadership, will be identified and posted on the MALPH website. Materials will be solicited from local health departments, MDHHS, MDEQ, and MDARD, as well as national and other public health partners. This website will be continuously updated by MALPH, with new and/or revised content provided by senior leadership from state and local public health entities.

#### **Mentorship Program for Public Health Leadership**

Options will be explored to provide mentorship opportunities for newly selected local public health leadership. These options will be vetted with the Project Workgroup and the Forums. The selected option(s) will be implemented in 2018.

#### **Training Gap Analysis**

During the project, gaps in training for other public health professionals will be identified, summarized, and reported.

*Mid-Michigan District Health Department will serve as fiduciary for the project.*

\*The Project Workgroup will be assembled with members from the MALPH Board of Directors and associated Forums, and will advise all components of the project.

November 2017

## Information for MALEHA November 16, 2017 Forum Meeting

**From:** Dettweiler, Dan (DEQ) [<mailto:DETTWEILERD@michigan.gov>]  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 26, 2017 5:15 PM  
**To:** Dettweiler, Dan (DEQ) <[DETTWEILERD@michigan.gov](mailto:DETTWEILERD@michigan.gov)>  
**Subject:** EPA's 2016 Michigan Drinking Water Program Review

Dear LHD Partners,

The final report of EPA's 2016 Michigan Drinking Water Program Review can be accessed at the following link:

<https://www.epa.gov/mi/2016-michigan-drinking-water-program-review>

The release of EPA's audit report provides an opportunity to acknowledge the expertise and dedication of people working at LHDs, the noncommunity program staff, administrators, and clerical support. The noncommunity program work reviewed by EPA is the collective output of LHD and DEQ working together. Audit findings are always a little difficult to receive, but certainly, the bigger picture is that we are doing a good job protecting public health, yet we must do better.

The NCWS-related findings and recommendations listed in the report, while generated from a mere sampling of noncommunity supplies in a handful of counties, are meant for all of us to consider as we plan our future work. DEQ and LHDs are already implementing corrective steps for some of the shortcomings identified. The report serves as a tool for us to use in setting priorities for new initiatives and refinements of processes already in place to ensure safe drinking water. DEQ values greatly the thoroughness of EPA's state review process. I believe you will find the report to be useful.

The audit report also recognizes that efforts to improve water supply compliance are limited by our current data systems. Eric Oswald, Director of Drinking Water and Municipal Assistance, DEQ, holds as his number one priority the modernization of information technology used by the Division. There is much to look forward to as we embark on a very large upgrade of the data management systems used to carry out our daily work. LHDs will also benefit significantly from these improvements.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the audit report, please contact the DEQ Noncommunity Staff assigned to your health department, or feel free to contact me.

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to public health protection.

DJD

Daniel J. Dettweiler, Supervisor  
Noncommunity Water Supplies Unit  
Drinking Water and Municipal Assistance Division  
Department of Environmental Quality  
PO Box 30817  
Lansing, MI 48909-8311

Email: [dettweilerd@michigan.gov](mailto:dettweilerd@michigan.gov)  
Tel. 517-284-6525



## **Agriculture Commission and MI Dept. of Agriculture & Rural Development Seeking Public Input on Agricultural Management Practices**

***Deadline to provide comment is November 29, 2017***

For immediate release: October 31, 2017

Media contact: [Jennifer Holton](#), 517-284-5724

LANSING - The Michigan Commission of Agriculture and Rural Development and the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development today announced a public input meeting and review period for the 2018 drafts of the state's Generally Accepted Agricultural and Management Practices (GAAMPs).

Public comment will be taken on the following GAAMPs, which have proposed changes: Manure Management and Utilization, Care of Farm Animals, and Site Selection and Odor Control for New and Expanding Livestock Facilities. The GAAMPs regarding the Nutrient Utilization, Cranberry Production, Farm Markets, Irrigation Water Use and Pesticide Utilization and Pest Control have no proposed changes for 2018.

The GAAMPs public input meeting will be held at 9:00 a.m. on Wednesday, November 29, 2017, in the J. Edward Hutchinson Conference Room, Atrium Level, at Constitution Hall, 525 West Allegan Street, Lansing, Michigan, 48933.

Written comments may be submitted to MDARD's Environmental Stewardship Division, P.O. Box 30017, Lansing, MI 48909 or sent via e-mail to [TurrubiatesO@michigan.gov](mailto:TurrubiatesO@michigan.gov) by 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, November 29, 2017. Mailed comments must be postmarked no later than November 29, 2017.

MDARD will forward all comments received by the due date to the respective GAAMPs Task Force Committee Chairpersons for consideration prior to final review and adoption.

These GAAMPs are reviewed annually by committees of various experts, and revised and updated as necessary. The GAAMPs are reviewed and approved by the Michigan Commission of Agriculture and Rural Development each year.

For a copy of any of these GAAMPs, including the proposed revisions, please visit [www.michigan.gov/righttofarm](http://www.michigan.gov/righttofarm), or contact MDARD's Environmental Stewardship Division at 517-284-5619 or toll-free at 877-632-1783.

## House Bill 4978 (2017)

### Report to MALEHA Forum on behalf of MALEHA Legislative Committee

House Bill 4978 requires the State Board of Education to revise its model Local Wellness Policy in consultation with MDEQ so that it includes a model Healthy School Environment Policy. This Policy would include a plan and schedule for testing water quality and indoor air quality in schools. The Policy would also include guidelines for the response to the presence of various contaminants. Accordingly, rules would be promulgated to ensure adequate local response to contamination.

Local schools would have one year from creation of the model policy to create a local policy consistent with the model. The policy would be reviewed by the Board and again every 5 years thereafter. The Board would be required to coordinate with local schools to provide technical assistance during water and air testing. The Board would then be required to compile test results and generate a report for the State Legislature.

Further, the Bill creates requirements for the use of “green” chemicals in schools.

On the surface this bill would appear to be a net positive for public health. It would create a requirement for air and water testing in schools as well as requirements for a response in the event of contamination. There are three main questions about/concerns with the bill as written:

- 1) Who would perform the testing?
- 2) Who would enforce the requirements for testing and contamination response?
- 3) How will the required testing, response, and any associated enforcement be funded?

The Bill is silent on these issues. The recommendation of the Legislative Committee is that MALEHA take a “neutral” position on this Bill until these questions are answered.

**LINK:** <http://www.bridgemi.com/guest-commentary/waste-water-why-michigan-needs-state-septic-code>

## Waste in the water – why Michigan needs a state septic code

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November 13, 2017

[Joan Rose](#)

[Guest Commentary](#)

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Dr. Joan Rose is an [international expert](#) on water microbiology, water quality and public health safety. She co-directs Michigan State University's Center for Advancing Microbial Risk Assessment and Center for Water Sciences.

In September, Isabella County Commissioners [approved a resolution](#) in favor of ensuring that a home's septic system is inspected before it is sold.

Why are people pushing for these new inspections?

Because Michigan's rivers, lakes and streams – including the Chippewa River in Isabella County – are facing alarming levels of contamination from human fecal bacteria and viruses, some that are dangerous.

In fact, the State of Michigan estimates that roughly half of its rivers and streams exceed the safety standard for concentrations of E. coli bacteria.

Escherichia coli (E. coli) is a type of bacteria that serves as a key water quality indicator. Because E. coli grows naturally in the gastrointestinal tract of warm-blooded animals and humans, its presence in a water sample tells us that fecal pollution has reached that water source by some means.

Furthermore, it suggests that additional dangerous pathogens may be present in the water as well, where they can infect humans through ingestion or skin contact. Diseases such as gastroenteritis, giardia, hepatitis, and cholera can all be spread this way.

What does this have to do with septic systems? Septic systems are a form of onsite sewage treatment common in rural Michigan communities, homes surrounding lakes, and throughout some suburban communities as well.

Household wastewater is sent to a large tank, where anaerobic bacteria break some of it down before allowing the water to flow out of the system into a drainfield for further filtration by the soil.

We have presumed that on-site wastewater disposal systems, such as septic tanks, were working, that they were effectively filtering our sewage.

Unfortunately, the evidence suggests otherwise – septic systems are contaminating our rivers, lakes and streams.

[Research conducted by my MSU lab](#) and released in 2015, found that septic systems in Michigan are not preventing E. coli and other fecal bacteria from reaching our water supplies. Our MSU team sampled 64 river systems, systems that drain approximately 84 percent of the Lower Peninsula, for E. coli and the human-specific source tracking marker bacteria called B-theta.

We performed stream sampling under what's known as "baseflow" conditions, which allowed us to focus in on the bacteria entering the stream from the surrounding groundwater. Using this approach allowed us to look at how pollution could be coming specifically from the groundwater, rather than from surface runoff from storm events.

Our research found a clear correlation: The more septic systems in the watershed, the more human fecal source tracking bacteria in the water.

If we want to keep E. coli and other pathogens out of our waterways, we need to address the problem of septic systems that may be failing to adequately treat our wastewater.

The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) estimates there are 130,000 failing systems currently operating in Michigan. That represents about 1-in-10 of more than 1.3-million systems installed statewide.

DEQ further estimates that Michigan's numerous failing septic systems release upwards of 31 million gallons of raw sewage every day into our groundwater.

Sometimes a failing septic system is obvious to the homeowner and is repaired or replaced quickly. But system failures can also easily go unnoticed and unrepaired for years.

What can be done? Despite the tremendous public health threat posed by these failing systems, Michigan is [the only state in the country](#) without a uniform septic code.

A statewide septic code would set basic standards to govern how on-site sewage treatment systems are designed, built, installed and maintained for the long term.

But while the state has failed to address the problem, 11 counties have enacted their own septic codes with varying requirements and degrees of protection.

State legislators in Lansing have debated the need for a statewide, uniform septic code [dating back to 2004](#), but have come up short.

Fortunately, there is a bipartisan effort in the works that may at last put this commonsense safeguard in place for our clean water. Until then, beware that that beautiful northern Michigan stream may not be quite as pure as you'd expect in Pure Michigan.

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## Preview

## Comments

## Steve Williams

Tue, 11/14/2017 - 8:43am

Good work Dr. Rose. Showing the nexus between the waters of the state and septic drainfields provides a basis for state standards. To this point, this issue has been considered a local matter with mixed results, mostly less than needed to protect the environment. The key then is to have reasonable standards that can be enforced.

- **REPLY**

**Jim Hegarty, PE**

Tue, 11/14/2017 - 8:57am

Even properly designed and installed septic systems pollute groundwater. They pollute starting on day one. Think of all the household chemicals people dump down their drains. And the nitrates (nutrients) not removed in the drainfield. The biggest problem with septic systems is allowing them in new 'suburban' developments--some serving more than 50 homes--because it's too expensive for developers to extend sewer lines.

- [REPLY](#)

**Matt**

Tue, 11/14/2017 - 11:56am

And very few could afford the homes! But forget the new homes! The number of older homes with long ago failed (if ever worked ?) septic systems where the "fix" was running a tile to drain the effluent into the "ditch" out back is huge! Take 40+ year old homes in clay probably 70%+ with problems. We don't dare face the costs. Bottled water is probably cheaper.

- [REPLY](#)

**Mark Bertler**

Tue, 11/14/2017 - 10:46am

Having worked on these issues during my tenure representing Michigan's local public health departments it continues to be a frustrating challenge. As the article suggests we have come close several times. Requiring necessary repairs at the point of sale is one strategy that can address existing failing septic systems when properties change hands. Also, as Mr. Hegarty suggests the uniform code also has to address the 21st century challenges of density and modern living that can overwhelm and render ineffective standard onsite septic systems. In addition, underground aquifers do not stop at governmental boundaries so while laudable, township, city and county ordinances will not fully address the problem and also pose confusion and economic hardship on citizens, builders and developers. It really is time that Michigan stepped up to protect its environment and citizens.

- [REPLY](#)

**Robyn Tonkin**

Tue, 11/14/2017 - 11:29am

I have thought about this issue and studied available literature, for almost 40 years, as we have had well and septic for that long. I am scrupulous about what goes down the drain, but I doubt that most people are. If a chemical compound, be it toxic drain opener, strong cleaning compound, or a chemical soup of personal care products, is sold in a store, it's okay to dump, right? If a doctor prescribes it, it's okay to put down the drain, right? I am not even mentioning the drugs that get into groundwater via voided urine. That aside, I have always thought about how we are supposed to accept that anaerobic bacteria can clean up what flows into the tank well enough to not pollute the groundwater, and thought that was probably not plausible. I think this is a soluble problem, I would imagine we have the science and technology to come up with systems and guidelines so that pollution is greatly minimized. But this would take the political will, first of all, where large swathes of politicians of all stripes to actually buckle down and care about the problem. that is not going to happen.

- [\*\*REPLY\*\*](#)

**Robert Tulloch**

Tue, 11/14/2017 - 9:08pm

And who would pay for this as yet undeveloped dream? The prime culprits are the houses and cottages around lakes all over Michigan. Target them first. They are the major source of contamination. Those lakefront cabins->houses-> homes should never have been allowed to be built. Just like the Lake Michigan shoreline should be public beaches w/o homes. Low density urban sprawls is a big problem. Every clown want their 1/2 acre with a house, two snow mobiles, two dirt bikes, a 1200 sq. ft house, 5 kids and a septic field. Bottom line: 25 acre minimum lot size.

- [\*\*REPLY\*\*](#)

**Jeff**

Tue, 11/14/2017 - 1:04pm

While Ph.D's are normally not very receptive to anyone questioning their work, these conclusions appear very generalized. I wasn't able to find the actual study to read it, but just from this and the older article linked to, there appears to be an absence of some important considerations. "Baseflow" condition protocols would also be intriguing, but I have some questions due to the extremely dynamic nature of geology surrounding surface water sources and the rate at which groundwater flows, depending upon that geology. I would also question the estimates by the DEQ as it works out to each failing septic

system producing 238 gallons of raw sewage every day. Since this article is focused entirely on homeowners and their septic systems as the only source of the E. Coli levels being higher than safety levels, I highly doubt this quantity is even possible. I would submit this includes estimates from municipal sources as well. There has been talk of statewide septic rules going back to the 1970's. As I recall, it was the counties who resisted any regulation because it would entirely be incumbent on them for the costs to try and enforce it. This all being said, there are some home septic systems which do need repair or replacing, perhaps close to the estimate. A properly designed, constructed and maintained septic system, below the surface, should last 30 years without any problems or contaminating any groundwater. The levels of E. Coli are a problem, but I submit, there is substantially more to it than just homeowners across the state with bad septic systems, especially when considering the "lifespan" of the bacteria. I would like to read the study first, then meet with the Dr. if it is possible.

- [REPLY](#)

**Mike Moyer**

Wed, 11/15/2017 - 3:04pm

How about an effective education program/process for homeowners with septic tanks ? My experience is that many, if not most, homeowners new to septic systems do not have a clue to good maintenance and inspections practices, but if given proper information and 'tools' are happy to maintain their systems for long, inexpensive and trouble-free life. Please don't discount this approach. It's working very well in our neighborhood ! Education and materials were provided by our septic tank pumper. As a result, he pumps each individual less often, the septic tank systems last longer, there are no system failures, and his customer base has grown exponentially.

- [REPLY](#)

**Mike Hubbard**

Wed, 11/15/2017 - 2:34pm

Basically a drop in the bucket compared to the storm overflow from municipalities and CAFOs. But true, we can do better. There are better and less expensive methods than stone and tile for septic fields as well.