



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**Septic Smart Week Promotes Public Health and Water Quality**

**BELLINGHAM, WA—** Septic Smart Week, celebrated September 16-20, 2019, is an annual event that focuses on something most people don't think about very often: what happens after you flush. But for the 28,500 homeowners and businesses in Whatcom County who rely on a septic system to contain and treat wastewater, it's a very important question.

"Regularly maintaining your septic system is absolutely the best thing to do to not only protect the health of people and our local waterways, but also protect your investment in your home or business," says John Wolpers, Environmental Health Manager for the Whatcom County Health Department. "We often hear from people that when they have their system evaluated, they find small problems that are easily and inexpensively fixed. It provides peace of mind that those problems won't grow to become bigger, more costly ones down the road."

Maintaining a septic system can feel daunting for some, but it doesn't have to be. Homeowners can take advantage of several tips and resources to become "septic smart" and reduce the burden of septic maintenance:

- **Have your septic system evaluated every one or three years and have it pumped when it's 1/3 full** – Evaluations and pumping are different, and both are important parts of routine septic system care.
- **Sign up for our free septic maintenance class for homeowners** – Classes are held monthly at the Ferndale WECU. Class details and registration info can be found at [whatcomcounty.us/septic](http://whatcomcounty.us/septic). If you can't make a class, training materials are available online.
- **Take advantage of [septic rebates](#)** – Rebates are available for septic evaluations, equipment installation and septic tank pumping when done by a licensed professional. To qualify you must attend the in person septic class provided by WCHD. Contact Kate Rice at Whatcom County Public Works for more information: [krice@co.whatcom.wa.us](mailto:krice@co.whatcom.wa.us) or 360-778-6302.
- **Apply for a loan program to repair or replace a failing septic system** – Loans are offered through a partnership between Whatcom County and the non-profit lender, [Craft 3](#).
- **Take everyday steps to protect your system** – Simple steps like using less water; not putting household chemicals, grease, or septic tank additives down the drain or into your system; and directing runoff from downspouts or driveways away from septic drainfields can help protect a septic system and keep costly repairs at bay.

Failing septic systems can leak waste and wastewater into groundwater used for wells and into local rivers, lakes and beaches, contaminating them with bacteria that can make people sick. The Whatcom County Health Department works with septic system professionals and homeowners to ensure septic systems in Whatcom County are functioning well and to prevent waste from polluting the water we need all rely on for many other uses.

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