

# 2022

## MOU Partners' SepticSmart Week Social Media Guide



Prepared by Partners of EPA's Decentralized Wastewater MOU  
Partnership

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## **Decentralized Wastewater MOU Partners’ SepticSmart Week Social Media Guide**

### [How to Use this MOU Partnership Guide](#)

Welcome! This SepticSmart Week Social Media Guide contains material and information your organization – a Decentralized Wastewater MOU Partner or an affiliate of the Decentralized Wastewater Program – can use to advertise and promote SepticSmart Week. In addition to the basic social media messages and outreach material, it includes tips and methods to track the information you share on your social media channels. You can copy these messages directly or customize them to reach your audience. Have fun and remember to be SepticSmart!

### [NEW! 10-Year Anniversary of SepticSmart Week](#)

The Decentralized Wastewater MOU Partnership celebrates 10 years of outreach and education activities that encourage homeowners and communities to care for and maintain their septic systems. We encourage MOU partners to promote this achievement in their social media messages. Throughout this guide, you will find personalized 10-year anniversary Twitter and Facebook posts as well as a blog post.

### [What You Should Know About SepticSmart Week](#)

SepticSmart Week is an annual event focused on educating homeowners and communities on the proper care and maintenance of their septic systems. Groups from federal, state, and local governments, the private sector, communities, and academia all participate in SepticSmart Week. You

can participate too by sharing these social media messages, promoting the outreach information, and advertising SepticSmart Week.

## SepticSmart Week Core Messages

- 10-Year Anniversary of SepticSmart Week
- General
- Save You Money
- Safeguard Your Family's Health
- Protect the Environment
- Protect It and Inspect It! (Day 1)
- Think at the Sink! (Day 2)
- Don't Overload the Commode! (Day 3)
- Pump Your Tank! (Day 4)
- Don't Strain Your Drain! (Day 5)
- Shield Your Field! (Day 6)
- Keep It Clean! (Day 7)

These are the core messages to promote during SepticSmart week using the associated social media materials, videos, and images. The MOU partners suggest focusing on one core message and one Quick Tip per day of SepticSmart Week. Core messages and Quick Tips are available in both English and Spanish and linked within this guide.

## Know Your Audience

One of the first things to consider with social media is identifying the audience you are trying to reach. Are you targeting professionals? Pumpers? Installers? County public health officials? Individual homeowners? Tailor your social media messages so you provide your audience with relevant tips, facts, and resources of SepticSmart Week. We encourage social media posts to link to the EPA Septic ([www.epa.gov/septic](http://www.epa.gov/septic)) website. When sharing a link to media content such as a Quick Tip video, make sure the thumbnail to the video appears underneath the post. This makes viewing the video as simple as possible (and internal to the social media platform), as opposed to opening a new window to YouTube. For Twitter, tweets can be preloaded and posted at a determined date and time using the online tools, such as [Hootsuite](#). For Facebook, posts can be scheduled for a date and time under posting options.

## Hashtags and Tagging

Hashtags are critical to engagement and evaluation. Think of a hashtag as a Google search term. If you or a similar organization want to follow a conversation, news, or content, the most efficient way to do that is through a hashtag. This feedback loop does two very important things: It increases the likelihood of sharing, liking, retweeting, etc., and it creates a permanent record of the activity. This documentation is important for evaluating what type of engagement is occurring, and how it has changed from previous years.

- Official hashtag: #SepticSmart
- Additional hashtags to consider: #SepticSmart10, #Wastewater, #CleanWater, #PollutionPrevention

Tagging is a way to mention individual and organizational accounts in a particular Facebook and Twitter post. Similar to hashtags, tagging an account in a post grabs the attention of both followers. We encourage MOU partners to tag accounts who they would like to engage with, such as the EPA Office of Water (@EPAwater).

### Twitter/Facebook/ LinkedIn/Instagram Messages

- **10-Year anniversary tweets to be used before and during the week.**
  - **Pre:** Get ready for the 10th anniversary of #SepticSmart Week! From Sept. 19-23 we'll be sharing tips on how to properly use and maintain septic systems. Learn how you can participate at [www.epa.gov/septic](http://www.epa.gov/septic)
  - **Pre:** Mark your calendars! Next week kicks off the 10th anniversary of #SepticSmart Week and we'll be sharing the public health, environmental, and economic benefits of a well-maintained septic system. Learn how you can participate at [www.epa.gov/septic](http://www.epa.gov/septic)
  - **Day of:** Today we're kicking off the 10th annual #SepticSmart Week! This week we recognize the importance of properly caring for and maintaining your septic system. Check in every day for #SepticSmart Quick Tips and learn more at <https://www.epa.gov/septic>
  - **During:** #SepticSmart Week celebrates 10 years of outreach and education activities that encourage homeowners and communities to care for and maintain their septic systems. Celebrate with us! <https://www.epa.gov/septic>
- **General tweets to be used throughout the week**
  - **DYK 1 in 5 U.S. homes have #septic systems?** Properly maintaining your septic system can safeguard your family's health, protect the environment, and save you money. Learn more at <https://www.epa.gov/septic>
  - **Costs:** #SepticSystems can be a cost-effective solution to treat #wastewater for homeowners in suburban and rural communities. Learn more at <https://www.epa.gov/septic>
  - **Public Health:** Proper use of #septic systems safeguards #public health by reducing the risk of harmful diseases and exposure of pathogens through drinking water. #CleanWater Learn more at <https://www.epa.gov/septic>
  - **The Environment:** #SepticSystems use gravity and natural filtration to treat #wastewater and replenish #groundwater supplies. #cleanwater. Learn more at <https://www.epa.gov/septic>
- **One week in advance (September 12, 2022)**
  - Do you have a septic system? Join us for #SepticSmart Week, Sept. 19-23! Learn how you can participate at <https://www.epa.gov/septic>
  - DYK 1 in 5 U.S. homes have #septic systems? Properly maintaining your septic system can safeguard your family's health, protect the environment, and save you money. Learn more at <https://www.epa.gov/septic>
  - [Save the Date](#) (PDF)
- **Four days in advance (September 15, 2022)**

- Do Your Part. Get #SepticSmart! Join us next week for SepticSmart Week and learn septic system #QuickTips at <https://www.epa.gov/septic>
- #SepticSystems treat small volumes of #wastewater from houses and businesses not served by a public #SewerSystem. Learn more at <https://www.epa.gov/septic>
- [Save the Date](#) (PDF)
- **Day 1 / September 19, 2022 / Protect It and Inspect It!**
  - Today @EPAwater is kicking off #SepticSmart Week! Look for our #QuickTips to stay #SepticSmart year-round <https://www.epa.gov/septic>
  - DYK 1 in 5 U.S. homes have #septicssystem? Properly maintaining your septic system can safeguard your family's health, protect the environment, and save you money. Learn more at <https://www.epa.gov/septic>
  - #SepticSmart #QuickTip: Protect It and Inspect It! Regular #septicssystem maintenance can save homeowners money and protect #publichealth <https://www.epa.gov/septic>
  - TO POST on Twitter: [Protect It and Inspect It \(JPEG\)](#)
  - Video to share: [Protect It and Inspect It!](#) (YouTube)
- **Day 2 / September 20, 2022 / Think at the Sink!**
  - #SepticSmart #QuickTip: Think at the Sink! What goes down your drain has a big impact on your #septicssystem. Get the scoop on #SepticSmart maintenance by visiting [epa.gov/septic https://youtu.be/fIWob2QtBvY](https://youtu.be/fIWob2QtBvY)
  - TO POST on Twitter: [Think at the Sink \(JPEG\)](#)
  - Video to share: [Think at the Sink!](#) (YouTube)
- **Day 3 / September 21, 2022 / Don't Overload the Commode!**
  - #SepticSmart #QuickTip: Don't Overload the Commode! Know what should and shouldn't go in your toilet and stay #SepticSmart at [epa.gov/septic https://youtu.be/mcYAubOSEvc](https://www.epa.gov/septic)
  - TO POST on Twitter: [Don't Overload the Commode \(JPEG\)](#)
  - Video to share: [Don't Overload the Commode!](#) (YouTube)
- **Day 4 / September 22, 2022 / Pump Your Tank!**
  - #SepticSmart #QuickTip: Pump Your Tank! Get your #septicssystem pumped every 3-5 years to maintain its lifespan! Learn more at [epa.gov/septic https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-nXw5wsRJxY](https://www.epa.gov/septic)
  - TO POST on Twitter: [Pump Your Tank \(JPEG\)](#)
  - Video to share: [Pump Your Tank!](#) (YouTube)
- **Day 5 / September 23, 2022 / Don't Strain Your Drain!**
  - #SepticSmart #QuickTip: Don't Strain Your Drain! The more water you conserve, the less ends up in your septic tank. Learn more at [epa.gov/septic https://youtu.be/om4mwk5VGN0](https://www.epa.gov/septic)
  - TO POST on Twitter: [Don't Strain Your Drain \(JPEG\)](#)
  - Video to share: [Don't Strain Your Drain!](#) (YouTube)

- **Day 6 / September 24, 2022 / Shield Your Field!**
  - #SepticSmart #QuickTip: Shield Your Field! Protect the drainfield of your #septicssystem by keeping the field free of trees, plants, and heavy objects. Learn more at epa.gov/septic <https://youtu.be/Q4bTQ0PQjJA>
  - TO POST on Twitter: [Shield Your Field \(JPEG\)](#)
  - Video to share: [Shield Your Field!](#) (YouTube)
- **Day 7 / September 25, 2022 / Keep It Clean!**
  - #SepticSmart #QuickTip: Keep it Clean! Test your drinking water well to keep your family healthy #CleanWater. Learn more at epa.gov/septic [https://youtu.be/Tz6wx8kmr\\_A](https://youtu.be/Tz6wx8kmr_A)
  - TO POST on Twitter: [Keep it Clean \(JPEG\)](#)
  - Video to share: [Keep it Clean!](#) (YouTube)

## Instagram

Instagram is a social media platform that emphasizes photo and video sharing. Users can take, edit, and publish images and videos for followers to interact with through likes, comments, and shares. As of March 2022, Statista found that 30.5 percent of U.S. Instagram users were between 25 and 34 years old. This is an important demographic because they may be more likely to be new homeowners. Instagram is also optimized for mobile use.

As seen in the examples in the appendix, users can post images of Quick Tips and other EPA Decentralized Wastewater Program outreach materials. Users can also personalize their images of homeowners in their town or county, images of construction projects, or even Septic Sam out on a boat. Users can also upload videos from their devices. Note: The maximum video length is 1 minute. For more information on how to use Instagram, visit this [Hootsuite walkthrough guide](#).



## Website Homepages and Web Graphics

- Include the “Save-the-Date” flyer on the homepage of your website
- [2022 SSW Save the Date Flyer](#) (PDF)
- To download the SepticSmart Week 2022 Seal, right-click on the image of the SepticSmart Week 2022 Seal below and click "Save image as..."

## NEW! Blog Posts

[NEW! Special 10-Year Anniversary MOU Partnership Article](#)  
Representatives of the EPA Decentralized Wastewater MOU Partnership led the development of an op-ed article to celebrate the

10-year anniversary of SepticSmart Week as well as to highlight the challenges and opportunities surrounding the decentralized wastewater industry.

Please disseminate this article on your organizations website, blog, or newsletter to spread the word!

### **Decentralized Wastewater Infrastructure: Challenges and Opportunities**

Approximately 20% of U.S. homes are served by decentralized wastewater (onsite/septic) systems. Although these systems can provide an effective means to treat wastewater, for many homeowners the systems are substandard, malfunctioning, or non-compliant.

In many cases, inadequate and malfunctioning wastewater infrastructure disproportionately affect people of color and low-income communities – they often lack the financial resources to tackle these challenges and contend with potential health risks to families. Across the country, malfunctioning decentralized (onsite/septic) wastewater infrastructure is making the news. Recent articles from the Black Belt of Alabama, as well as Alaska, North Carolina, New Mexico and Massachusetts all point to the need for more funding to support building, repairing, or replacing aging or non-existent decentralized systems.

But it's not all bad news. The arrival of the [Bipartisan Infrastructure Law](#) (BIL) provides an unprecedented opportunity to address wastewater infrastructure needs, particularly for underserved communities with decentralized infrastructure. The BIL provides \$11.7 billion through the Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) and sets aside 49% of that funding for grants or forgivable loans. This provides a pathway for communities to access traditional CWSRF loans to upgrade their wastewater infrastructure.

The decentralized wastewater industry is excited to have this moment! In our efforts to provide the country with safe and reliable wastewater treatment, we are also aware of the increasing need to provide support to those who need it most to repair, replace or access financing for a new decentralized system. In fact, there are 20 organizations that [participate](#) in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to collaborate on decentralized wastewater issues.

The EPA's Decentralized Wastewater MOU Partnership prioritizes education and outreach to homeowners with decentralized systems. EPA's [SepticSmart program](#) is an example of these efforts to share information with homeowners on the proper use, maintenance, and upkeep of decentralized systems. This year the Decentralized Wastewater MOU Partnership and EPA [celebrate](#) the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of SepticSmart Week from September 19-23, 2022! In recognition of this anniversary, EPA is sponsoring a photo challenge to encourage interest in demonstrating the seven [SepticSmart Quick Tips](#). We encourage you, your company, customers, or industry to take part by submitting photos or videos. Visit [epa.gov/septic](https://epa.gov/septic) for additional information on the challenge.

The SepticSmart program also has an online [outreach toolkit](#) that provides useful information and videos on what to flush/not flush, the importance of inspecting your system, and pumping septic tanks as needed. These tools are intended to equip homeowners with the necessary basic information to keep their systems running effectively and efficiently.



The Decentralized Wastewater MOU Partnership has worked together since 2005 on priority issues, including mechanisms to fund or finance decentralized wastewater systems. EPA recently [released a guide](#) on how to use the CWSRF for financing decentralized projects. The MOU Partners are also focused on initiatives that problem-solve and find creative solutions to meet the nation's decentralized wastewater financing needs (e.g. [Decentralized Wastewater Innovation](#) and [Community Plumbing Challenge](#)).

There is no doubt that much remains to be done to meet the needs of decentralized homeowners, particularly for those in underserved communities. Members of the MOU Partnership are working hard to ensure there are funding opportunities across the nation to meet these needs, brainstorming solutions to address malfunctioning systems, and working collaboratively to ensure all Americans have access to safe, reliable wastewater infrastructure, now and for future generations.

Signed,

Mary Clark, Technical Advisor, MDB, Inc. in collaboration with EPA Decentralized Wastewater MOU Partners



To download the MOU Partnership logo block, right-click on the image above and click "Save image as..."

### [NEW! IAPMO Environmental Justice Themed Article](#)

The International Association of Plumbing and Mechanical Officials (IAPMO) is in the process of developing a blog post on decentralized wastewater systems within the context of environmental justice. This blog post will be published on the EPA website. We also encourage MOU partners to share on their websites, blogs, or newsletters.

### [How to Guide: Governor, Mayor, Leaders, and Local SepticSmart Week Proclamations](#)

SepticSmart Week typically takes place on the third week of September every year. This annual event focuses on educating homeowners and communities on the proper care and maintenance of their septic systems, as well as protecting public health, the environment, and one's property value. To make the

most of SepticSmart Week, EPA and the Decentralized Wastewater MOU Partnership developed numerous outreach materials and resources, which are available at <https://www.epa.gov/septic/septic-systems-outreach-toolkit>.

The SepticSmart Week Proclamation is a popular resource available in the toolkit. This proclamation is a one-page declaration that shows support for SepticSmart Week. Proclamations can be issued by governors, mayors, local health or environment department leaders, MOU partner organization leaders, affiliate organization leaders, community organization leaders, and more. The proclamation templates are customizable. We hope that proclamations can be issued at the start of SepticSmart Week; however, we will accept them anytime! The show of support is what matters most.

#### SepticSmart Week Proclamation Templates

- [SepticSmart Week Proclamation for Governors \(WORD\)](#)
- [SepticSmart Week Proclamation for Mayors \(WORD\)](#)
- [SepticSmart Week Proclamation for Leaders \(WORD\)](#)
- [SepticSmart Week Proclamation for Decentralized Wastewater MOU Partners \(WORD\)](#)

## MOU Recognition Document

The SepticSmart Week Proclamation is the best tool for MOU partners to express their support for SepticSmart Week. However, for those partners who are unable to issue an organizational proclamation, we recommend posting the new MOU Recognition Document. The document, available in the outreach toolkit, is an alternative to the proclamation and does not require editing or signing. It includes a statement formally recognizing SepticSmart Week, the Decentralized Wastewater MOU Partnership logo, the SepticSmart Week logo, and the MOU Partnership logo block. The document is available in multiple formats and can be posted on your website or social media platforms. We encourage organizations with state affiliates to promote the recognition document as well.

#### SepticSmart Week MOU Recognition Document

- [Recognition Document \(WORD\)](#)
- [Recognition Document \(PDF\)](#)

## Monthly Planning Guide to a SepticSmart Week Proclamation

MONTH	STEPS	IMPORTANT NOTES
June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Begin gathering information</li> <li>• Create a timeline</li> <li>• Identify any established procedures around securing a proclamation</li> <li>• Ensure you have leadership support and make sure that is</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Start early!</li> <li>• Save email from your leadership approving initiative as your Governor’s Office may ask for it</li> <li>• Make sure wording is short and to the point</li> <li>• Explain how it will benefit communities</li> <li>• Make sure the proclamation is in Microsoft Word for easy editing</li> </ul>

	<p>communicated in each step</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop the wording for the proclamation (see EPA sample <a href="#">proclamations</a>)</li> <li>• Draft memo from agency head to your state’s appointed health official (i.e. Secretary of Health, Surgeon General, etc.)</li> <li>• Draft memo from Health Official to Governor’s Office</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Write the Governor’s Proclamation yourself in plain text, without any formatting. This makes it easy for the Governor’s Office to simply use your draft and add on their Governor Proclamation formatting</li> <li>• Check out examples of previous years’ proclamations (<a href="https://www.epa.gov/septic/septicsmart-week-2017-proclamations">https://www.epa.gov/septic/septicsmart-week-2017-proclamations</a>)</li> </ul>
<b>July</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enlist support from other state/local health departments</li> <li>• Identify a point person in the process, whether at the State Health Department or Governor’s Office that you can check in with</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keeping in touch will help you to know the status of your request and if there is anything missing that you need to submit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Knowing this early on is important so that you do not run out of time to make corrections or additions</li> <li>○ Follow up with emails and phone calls</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Ensure memos are sent from agency head to health official</li> </ul>
<b>August</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When you receive your proclamation, SHARE IT! Share it at local events, social media posts and news releases</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The proclamation gets posted on the governor’s webpage, bringing more attention to your cause</li> <li>• The proclamation adds more weight to your social media posts and increases the chance of it being picked up and shared across wider audiences</li> </ul>
<b>September</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share! Share! Share!</li> <li>• Measure your impact!</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Metrics matter! As much as possible, identify the impact of your outreach activities.</li> <li>• Connect with partners to measure impact <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Are calls regarding septic system operation and maintenance increasing?</li> <li>○ Are local health departments seeing an increase in calls?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

## NEW! EPA Outreach Toolkit and Materials

- Quick tips, flyers, website graphics, postcards, brochures, mail inserts, guides, and door hangers can be found on [EPA's Septic Systems Outreach Toolkit](#)
- [The Do's and Don'ts of Your Septic System](#) – popular downloadable graphic
- Take full advantage of the [materials](#) provided by EPA. These materials can be modified to fit your unique community regulations and needs. Your jurisdictional contact information can also be added.
- Nearly all EPA SepticSmart outreach materials have been translated into the Spanish language. We encourage users to utilize these materials when communicating to predominantly Spanish-speaking communities.
  - NEW! [Owners of Rental Property with Septic Systems](#) in Spanish
  - NEW! SepticSmart Kitchen and Bathroom Posters in Spanish
    - Poster for [Remote Parks, Campgrounds, Rest Stops](#) (Spanish version)
    - Poster for [Remote Restaurants/ Kitchen](#) (Spanish version)

## Quick Tip Videos

- Share videos for the following Quick Tips!
- Link for all videos: <https://www.epa.gov/septic/septic-smart-week-quick-tip-videos>, or individually:
  - NEW! SepticSmart Compilation Quick Tips
  - [Think at the Sink!](#)
  - [Don't Strain Your Drain!](#)
  - [Keep it Clean!](#)
  - [Shield Your Field!](#)
  - [Don't Overload the Commode!](#)
  - [Pump Your Tank!](#)
  - [Protect It and Inspect It!](#)

## Images and Graphics

- Use pictures to tell the story!
- Photos or images associated with each of the SepticSmart Week Quick Tips:
  - Think at the Sink! [English version](#) | [Spanish version](#)
  - Don't Strain Your Drain! [English version](#) | [Spanish version](#)
  - Keep It Clean! [English version](#) | [Spanish version](#)
  - Shield Your Field! [English version](#) | [Spanish version](#)
  - Protect It and Inspect It! [English version](#) | [Spanish version](#)
  - Don't Overload the Commode! [English version](#) | [Spanish version](#)
  - Pump Your Tank! [English version](#) | [Spanish version](#)
- Use the home [infographic](#) with core SepticSmart messages:
  - [Do Your Part Infographic](#)

## NEW! SepticSmart Photo Challenge

This year, The EPA Decentralized Wastewater Program, in collaboration with the EPA Decentralized MOU Partnership, launched its first photo challenge that will highlight the importance of septic systems in protecting family health and safeguarding local waterways.

The photo challenge is encouraging the decentralized community, including septic homeowners, wastewater professionals and engineers, and state and local officials, to submit septic-themed photos. These photos will be informative, educational, and creative depictions of septic systems – how they support households and communities, treat wastewater, benefit the environment and local waterbodies, and how they can be maintained.

Photos will be submitted to [decentralized@epa.gov](mailto:decentralized@epa.gov) from August 1 to September 16. The top three images will be featured on the [epa.gov/septic](https://epa.gov/septic) website and shared on the EPA Office of Water Twitter and Facebook pages. We strongly encourage MOU Partnership participation in promoting the challenge to your networks and highlighting the winning photos on your social media accounts, website, or newsletter.

## Press Releases and Public Service Announcements (PSAs)

### Press Release

## EPA's Tenth Annual SepticSmart Week: Safeguard Your Family's Health, Protect the Environment, and Save Money

Sept. X, 2022

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), supported by state and local governments, the private sector, communities, and academia, will sponsor its tenth SepticSmart Week 2022, Sept. 19-23, an annual event focused on educating homeowners and communities on the proper care and maintenance of their septic systems.

“The tenth anniversary of SepticSmart Week is an opportunity to highlight the importance of these systems to meeting America’s wastewater infrastructure needs,” **said Office of Water Administrator Radhika Fox**. “It’s a great time to learn more about caring for and maintaining your septic system!”

Organizations and individuals wishing to promote SepticSmart Week 2022 are encouraged to create public awareness about the event and share helpful tips, such as:

- **Think at the Sink!**: What goes down the drain has a big impact on your septic system. Fats, grease, and solids can clog a system’s pipes and drainfield.
- **Don’t Overload the Commode!**: A toilet is not a trash can. Disposable diapers and wipes, feminine hygiene products, coffee grounds, cigarette butts, and cat litter can damage a septic system.
- **Don’t Strain Your Drain!**: Use water efficiently and stagger use of water-based appliances. Too much water use at once can overload a system that hasn’t been pumped recently.

- **Shield Your Field!:** Tree and shrub roots, cars, and livestock can damage your septic drainfield.
- **Keep It Clean!:** Contamination can occur when a septic system leaks due to improper maintenance. Be sure your drinking water is safe to drink by testing it regularly.
- **Protect It and Inspect It!:** Regular septic system maintenance can save homeowners thousands of dollars in repairs and protect public health.
- **Pump Your Tank!:** Ensure your septic tank is pumped at regularly intervals as recommended by a professional and/or local permitting authority.

SepticSmart Week 2022 encourages homeowners, wastewater professionals, and state, tribal, and local officials to design and maintain effective systems to safeguard your family’s health, protect the environment, and save money. Be part of the solution by visiting [www.epa.gov/septic](http://www.epa.gov/septic) for an abundance of resources and information.

#### Background:

More than one-fifth of U.S. households utilize an individual onsite (septic) system or small community cluster septic system to treat their wastewater. These systems treat and dispose of relatively small volumes of wastewater and include a wide range of individual and cluster treatment options to process household and commercial sewage. These systems go by such names as septic, decentralized wastewater treatment, cluster, package plants, on-lot, individual sewage disposal, and private sewage.

Onsite systems provide a cost-effective, long-term option for treating wastewater, particularly in sparsely populated areas. When properly installed, operated, and maintained, these systems help protect public health, preserve valuable water resources, and maintain a community’s economic vitality. EPA’s SepticSmart initiative is a nationwide public education effort offering educational resources to homeowners, local organizations, and government leaders to explain how septic systems work and provide tips on how to properly maintain them.

#### Public Service Announcements (PSAs)

- Septic Sam says, ‘Save the Date’. SepticSmart Week is September 19th through the 23rd. Each year EPA holds SepticSmart Week with outreach activities to encourage homeowners and communities to care for and maintain their septic systems. You wouldn’t drink out of your toilet would you? That is why information about maintenance and care is so important to help keep our water resources and our environment clean and safe. Septic Sam says call xxx-xxx-xxxx to learn more or go to [insert agency website].
- Septic Sam says, ‘Do Your Part, Be SepticSmart’! Learn more about septic system care and maintenance during SepticSmart Week, September 19th through the 23rd. Each year the EPA uses SepticSmart Week to reach out to homeowners and communities, to care for and maintain their septic systems. You wouldn’t drink out of your toilet would you? That’s why information about your septic system is vital in helping to prevent pollution and contamination of our environment and water resources. Call xxx-xxx-xxxx or go to [insert agency website].

## Additional Tips and Ideas to Promote SepticSmart Week

- Share information with other jurisdictions as early as possible so they can have time to add it to their outreach calendar.
- Create partnerships with industry to promote SepticSmart Week and share informational flyers. Some septic system service providers have offered a discount for services booked during SepticSmart Week creating a win-win situation. This works well in the Val-Pack coupon mailers.
- Bus ads and billboards can be used throughout the state and reach a lot of people.
- Reach out to other agencies for opportunities to share information. Some ideas include:
  - Highway signs or other “outdoor” advertising
  - Permitting/Inspection
- Look within the health department for other outlets:
  - Public Health Nurse home visits
  - Healthy home inspections
  - Restaurant inspections for establishments that rely on septic

## Evaluation

Evaluation is a critical component for understanding the success, reach, and impact of social media engagement. It helps identify the audience and whether the message has increased their awareness. Feedback can also be used to inform future decision-making.

Below is a list of quantitative and qualitative measurable actions the program can measure, track, and document to develop an evaluation summary.

## Social Media

***(See below for how to track your social media presence)***

- Total Reach and Impressions
- Total Likes and Shares

## Other Engagement

- Survey participation
- Attendance of workshop or training
- Website traffic

## Track Your Social Media Reach

- Keep track of your social media efforts so you can report out on who you reached. As an MOU partner, it is extremely helpful for all of us to know the extent of our individual and collective efforts to send the SepticSmart message.
- Free social media trackers are available to identify audience, reach, and how well a message is received (a few examples below). Then you can report back to the other partners with your results!
  - [Google Analytics](#) - Tracks user activity on your website in real-time, such as: daily site visits, demographics of users, how they reached your site, how long they stay on your site, and which parts of your website are most and least popular.

- [Hootsuite](#) - Measures social media ROI from all platforms in one place. The [free](#) version allows for 1 user and 3 social media platforms). A free 30-day [trial](#) for some advanced features is also available.
- [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) Insights
- Metrics:
  - First identify your “Call to Action.” Are you trying to get people to go to your website? Are you trying to get people to share your post?
  - Second, identify the appropriate metric to use based on your call to action:
    - Measuring awareness: how far is your message spreading (volume, reach, exposure, amplification)
    - Measuring engagement: how many people are participating, how often and in what forms are they participating (likes, retweets, comments, replies, and participants)
    - Measuring traffic: are people moving through social media to your external site, and what do they do on your site (track URL shares, clicks, and conversions)
  - Third, analyze the buzz you are creating.
    - Use the tools above or generic tools such as:
      - [Social Mention](#): real-time social media search and analysis that tracks user sentiment, top keywords and users, hashtags, and sources of your search word. Type in a word, such as “[septic system](#)” to search its mention online



## Appendix

# MOU Partners' SepticSmart Week Social Media Guide

The appendix document provides supplementary information to the MOU Partners' SepticSmart Week Social Media Guide.

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## MOU Partners' Social Media Accounts

- Partner Twitter Accounts: @ACWAWater, @ASTHO, @ASDWAorg, @CDCgov, @ECOStates, @GWPCorg, @IAPMO, @NEHAorg, @NRWA, @NSF\_Intl, @RCAPInc, @WEForg, @USWaterAlliance, @DigDeepH2O
- Partner Facebook Accounts:
  - ACWA: <https://www.facebook.com/acwawater/>
  - ASTHO: <https://www.facebook.com/StatePublicHealth/>
  - ASDWA: <https://www.facebook.com/ASDWAorg/>
  - CDC: <https://www.facebook.com/cdc>
  - ECOStates: <https://www.facebook.com/ECOStates/>
  - IAPMO: <https://www.facebook.com/IAPMO/>
  - NEHA: <https://www.facebook.com/NEHA.org/>
  - NRWA: <https://www.facebook.com/NationalRuralWaterAssociation/>
  - NSF: <https://www.facebook.com/US.NSF>

- RCAP <https://www.facebook.com/RCAPInc>
- WEF: <https://www.facebook.com/worldeconomicforum/>
- DigDeep: <https://www.facebook.com/DigDeepWater/>

## Archived Blog Posts

### SepticSmart Week

*By National Environmental Health Association (NEHA)*

EPA's SepticSmart Week will take place September 20-24, 2021. This event focuses on educating homeowners and communities on the proper care and maintenance of their septic systems. With over one in five households in the U.S. using septic systems, it's important to learn how homeowners can save money, protect their health, and preserve the environment by following EPA's SepticSmart Week tips and advice. The [National Environmental Health Association](#) also has a webpage devoted to septic system information and resources.

In recent years, climate change has threatened wastewater treatment systems. This means that due to sea level rise and increased precipitation, your household's septic system may become less effective at removing contaminants from wastewater and preventing surface water pollution.

Septic systems work by collecting wastewater from your toilet, sink, and shower, allowing the solids to settle at the bottom of the tank, and discharging the liquids to an area called a "drainfield" or "leachfield," where the wastewater filters through the soil before rejoining the groundwater below (U.S. EPA). However, rising sea levels and increased precipitation are causing groundwater tables to rise in some parts of the U.S., which reduces the distance travelled by the wastewater before it reaches the groundwater. This reduces the capacity of the filtering system (Mihaly, 2017). Additionally, rising temperatures and more frequent rain and snowfall deplete oxygen levels in soil. Oxygen is a necessary component for removing pathogens from wastewater as it filters through the drainfield, and reduced oxygen levels may reduce the effectiveness of this process (Mihaly, 2017). If the drainfield cannot properly filter your household's wastewater, pathogens and chemical pollutants could make their way into recreational or drinking water sources.

Flooding and storm surging exacerbated by climate change may also lead to septic tank overflows, which can cause wastewater to flood your home or yard and can contaminate surface water. Floods may also dislodge septic tanks from the ground, and disasters such as earthquakes and wildfires can damage tanks (NEHA). This is of especially high concern in areas with old, deteriorating septic system infrastructure.

Residential wastewater pollution can result in foul odors, closure of swimming areas, and loss of biodiversity and aquatic habitats. If your household uses a septic system and also gets its water from a private well, a malfunctioning septic system could result in wastewater contaminants leaching into your drinking water. The bacteria, parasites and viruses present in wastewater can cause meningitis, gastroenteritis, cholera, dysentery, hepatitis, and other illnesses (Chahal et al, 2016).

To reduce the risk of your septic system malfunctioning, it's important to properly care for your system. Regular septic system maintenance costs around \$250-\$300 per year – much less than the \$3,000-\$7,000 it costs to replace an entire system – and prevents your property value from depreciating. Proper maintenance also prevents contamination by disease-causing pathogens and chemical pollutants, protecting your health and the environment (U.S. EPA).

Household septic systems should be inspected at least once every three years by a licensed professional, and household tanks should be pumped every three to five years. How often you should get your tank pumped depends on the size of your household, the volume of wastewater and waste solids generated, and the size of your septic tank (U.S. EPA).

On a daily basis, you can care for your septic system by using water efficiently. Using high-efficiency toilets, faucets, and showerheads and spreading washing machine use throughout the week can reduce the risk of your septic system failing. In addition, be sure to properly dispose of all household waste – do not flush anything besides human waste and toilet paper down the toilet, and avoid pouring chemical drain cleaners, oils, grease, or oil-based paints down your sink. In order to maintain your drainfield, never park, drive, plant trees, or place rainwater drainage systems in the drainfield area (U.S. EPA).

This SepticSmart Week, keep your septic system running smoothly and prevent wastewater from contaminating your drinking and swimming water. As sea levels and temperatures continue to rise, proper septic system maintenance is more crucial than ever to protect your own health and that of your community.

*Chahal, C., van den Akker, B., Young, F., Franco, C., Blackbeard, J., & Monis, P. (2016). Pathogen and Particle Associations in Wastewater: Significance and Implications for Treatment and Disinfection Processes. Advances in applied microbiology, 97, 63–119.*

<https://doi.org/10.1016/bs.aambs.2016.08.001>

*Mihaly, E. (2017). Avoiding Septic Shock: How Climate Change Can Cause Septic System Failure and Whether New England States are Prepared. Conservation Law Foundation. Retrieved from*

[https://www.clf.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Avoiding-Septic-Shock\\_CLF-White-Paper\\_2017.pdf](https://www.clf.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Avoiding-Septic-Shock_CLF-White-Paper_2017.pdf)

*National Environmental Health Association, n.d. Preparedness & Response for Septic Systems. Retrieved from*

<https://www.neha.org/eh-topic/preparedness-response-septic-systems>

*United States Environmental Protection Agency, n.d. Septic Systems. Retrieved from*

<https://www.epa.gov/septic>

Illinois-based Program Creates National Impact for Septic, Private Well Users

By [PrivateWellClass.org](http://PrivateWellClass.org)

It's hard for anyone to manage and value what they can't see.

Groundwater is often called our hidden resource. That's why it's critical to bring engaging and visual groundwater education to the 45 million septic system and private well users in the United States through U.S. EPA's SepticSmart Week (September 20-24, 2021) and other year-round activities. A program based at the Illinois State Water Survey (ISWS) on the campus of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign leverages both in-person and online events to share expertise and increase public awareness of domestic water and wastewater issues.

Because improperly managed septic systems can be a source of contamination for drinking water supplies, program manager Steve Wilson frequently turns to [materials available through the SepticSmart program](#) to help raise awareness and communicate septic system best practices.

Day to day ISWS geologists, engineers, and hydrologists conduct applied research on groundwater and water quality topics as well as provide support to individuals who are searching for well and groundwater-related information or who have questions about local water quality issues.

This work extends far beyond the borders of Illinois. In addition to these roles, ISWS staff conduct nationwide outreach and education to private well owners and those with septic systems via the PrivateWellClass.org initiative.

### **A Model for Outreach and Education**

ISWS staff participate in events that reach a wide range of stakeholders but have found live demonstrations using sand tank models to be most engaging. Imagine a fish tank filled with sand, gravel, and miniature wells, septic tanks, and houses. These models show how groundwater flows and gets contaminated as well as how septic systems function.

"When participants can see the dyed water flowing through the ground and reaching a well or stream, it has a dramatic effect, usually leading to lots of questions," says Wilson.

Wilson also shares that ISWS staff find it particularly rewarding to work with school-age children. His staff typically attend the Illinois State Fair where "Conservation World" provides many hands-on booths for children and adults alike. In 2019, staff engaged with over 200 well owners during the 10-day fair and demonstrated shallow groundwater contamination to over 500 children.

The Clean Water Celebration is another opportunity for ISWS staff to introduce these important concepts to young minds. Held annually at the Peoria, IL civic center, the event brings together over 2,500 middle school children where we use our sand tank models, well components, and hand pump to provide a memorable hands-on experience.

Inspired by these efforts, the Rural Community Assistance Partnership (RCAP) purchased sand tank models for their field staff to use in outreach and education work across the country. RCAP is a national network of non-profit organizations working to provide technical assistance, training, resources, and support to rural communities across the United States, tribal lands, and U.S. territories.

## PrivateWellClass.org

Funded in partnership with RCAP through a grant from U.S. EPA, PrivateWellClass.org is an online, multimedia initiative that annually reaches more than 27,000 homeowners and stakeholders who serve the domestic well and septic user.

The initiative includes regular webinars, interactive online educational sessions, on private well or septic system best practices. Wilson shared that the webinars are held for private well and septic system owners to “develop their understanding of system maintenance and water quality protection as well as ask specific questions.”

Industry-wide events have also helped PrivateWellClass.org to increase awareness of well and septic issues. The team participates in the National Ground Water Association’s Groundwater Awareness Week in March and, of course, SepticSmart Week in September. These events are extremely popular and feed on each participant’s efforts, especially through social media.

PrivateWellClass.org additionally offers resources to help concerned citizens and professionals alike to develop their knowledge of groundwater issues and better serve their local communities.

“Together we can protect public health and groundwater resources. It starts with education,” says Wilson.

### Case Study: Exceptional Efforts to Increase Awareness of Septic Systems in Whatcom County, Washington

Located in the northwest of Washington State with the Canadian border to the north and the Salish Sea to the west, Whatcom County is known for their rich water-intensive resources such as their aquaculture of shellfish and agriculture of raspberries. Therefore, protecting waterbodies and watersheds have been a top priority.

With more than 28,000 total septic systems, including 20,000 septic systems on sensitive areas along the coast and on the Lake Whatcom watershed, the county worked with seven coordinating partners who represent local municipalities to undertake a multi-year innovative campaign. The goal was to dramatically increase awareness of septic systems and to encourage best management practices for homeowners, utilizing SepticSmart Week and Clean Water Week to amplify their message.

1. **Assessment:** The County utilized surveys and interviews to establish a baseline of the residents’ understanding of septic systems.
2. **Initiatives:** This step helped inform the creation of communications outreach such as a press release, postcards, social media posts, and radio ads. The County also hosted events such as homeowners workshops and a public viewing of the feature film Mr. Toilet, a documentary on global sanitation.
3. **Evaluation:** These efforts proved to have effectively increased awareness based on workshop attendance, responses from a follow-up survey, and increased website traffic.

In addition to the coordinated messaging approach, the County focused on leveraging federal, state, and local funding sources, and increasing water quality monitoring capacity. For more information about Whatcom County's campaign, [visit](#) the County's website.

## Radio Ads

- If you're buying a home in [insert State] you might be purchasing a septic system as well. Septic systems are effective and easy to maintain, but failing systems are a major cause of water pollution and can be expensive to replace. Learn the warning signs including slowly draining sinks, and toilets, or sewage odors in the house or yard. Better yet, get a professional to inspect your system, determine the age of the system, and make sure that it is properly sized for your current needs. Please check with local authorities for additional requirements in your area. This message is brought to you by [insert agency name].
- Out of sight and out of mind... Does that describe your relationship with your septic system? Proper maintenance of your septic system will affect how well it works, and, how long it lasts. And the most important part of maintenance is a regular inspection. Don't wait until there's a problem. Inspections will catch problems before they become serious and expensive to correct. The results can also suggest simple lifestyle changes such as conserving water. That will extend the life of your system. To learn more about your septic system, call your local [insert agency] office and request any materials designed especially for homeowners with septic systems. Protect your property, your family, and the environment, by getting to know your septic system. Please check with local authorities for additional requirements and recommendations in your area. This message is brought to you by [insert agency name].
- If you're like most homeowners, you don't think about what happens to things that go down the drain. But if you have a septic system, those things can come back to haunt you. Several things can damage your septic system and cause unpleasant and expensive problems. Don't use your toilet as a trashcan... unless you want those items back. Call [insert agency name] to learn more about your septic system before it's too late. Protect your property, your family, and your neighbors by getting to know your septic system. This message is brought to you by [insert agency name].

## Talking Points for MOU Partners

- "SepticSmart Week is an important event in our community which reminds homeowners to maintain their septic systems. A well-managed septic system protects the health of the homeowner, as well as their neighbors and the community. Those who participate in SepticSmart Week should be commended."
- "SepticSmart Week is an important step in raising awareness about septic systems and maintenance in our community. This campaign brings community members together and fosters good stewardship. Septic maintenance helps the community avoid costly repairs, maintain home property values, and protect local water sources."

- “SepticSmart Week generates revenue for small businesses - septic installers, manufacturers and service providers. This small business growth supports local economies, jobs and families.”
- “[Organization name] is proud to participate in SepticSmart Week 2022. Proper septic maintenance and care is essential to protecting the property, health, and environment of our community(ies). We hope that homeowners take a moment this week to schedule service they may have put off and follow septic maintenance best practices.”

## Personalize It!

- Some of the brochures, pamphlets, and postcards on [www.epa.gov/septic](http://www.epa.gov/septic) have white space on the front page to place your business card or use with a mailing label
- Use these existing materials and add your own personalized mailing label or company logo.
  - [Homeowner's Brochure](#)
  - [Homebuyer's Guide](#)
  - [Spring Postcard](#)

## COVID-19 and Wastewater Safety and Health Resources

While there has not been documentation of someone getting sick with COVID-19 from direct exposure to treated or untreated wastewater, there are remaining connections between the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and wastewater, such as sanitation worker safety, increased used of disinfection wipes, and the opportunity to track community levels through wastewater. Below is a sample of resources from federal agencies and organizations involved in the MOU partnership that may be useful references if addressing these ongoing issues and opportunities during SepticSmart Week.

- Coronavirus and Drinking Water and Wastewater - [Webpage](#) from EPA
- NOWRA, Onsite Wastewater and the Coronavirus Outbreak - [Webpage](#) information from NOWRA
- PSA on Use of Cleaning Wipes During COVID-19 - [PSA](#) from Sara Heger, NOWRA
- EPA on Disinfection Wipes and COVID-19 - [EPA statement](#) on disinfecting wipes during COVID-19
- COVID-19 Guidance and Resources - [Webpage](#) information from WRF

# Social Media Examples

## Twitter

**Indiana Department of Environmental Management** · Sep 13, 2020

#SepticSmartWeek starts tomorrow!

Do you have a septic system? Then you may already know it is YOUR responsibility to maintain it!

Be #SepticSmart - here are 10 ways to be a good septic owner 📌



- ✓ Have your system inspected every three years by a qualified professional or according to your state/local health department's recommendations
- ✓ Have your septic tank pumped, when necessary, generally every three to five years
- ✓ Avoid pouring harsh products (e.g., oils, grease, chemicals, paint, medications) down the drain
- ✓ Hazard non-degradable products in the trash (e.g., tires, disposable wires, car tires) instead

**ASTHO** · Sep 15, 2020

Do you know what does and doesn't go into your kitchen sink? For #SepticSmart week, learn to keep your septic system in good shape by watching @EPA's video.



Think At The Sink!  
NOTE: If you need captions, please click the CC button on the player to turn them on. This U.S. ...  
[youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com)

**GWPC** @GWPC.org · Sep 16, 2020

17% 1 in 5 U.S. homes have septic systems! Properly maintaining your septic system can safeguard your family's health, protect the environment, and save you money. Learn more at [epa.gov/septic](http://epa.gov/septic) #SepticSmart



U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region

**RCAP** @RCAP19 · Sep 20, 2020

Keep It Clean! Properly maintaining your septic system helps to prevent contamination to your drinking water well. Test the cleanliness of your well water regularly to keep your family healthy. Learn more #SepticSmart tips at [epa.gov/septic](http://epa.gov/septic)



If you have a well, many things can contaminate your drinking water, such as a failing septic system. Test your well water regularly! Learn more at [www.epa.gov/septic](http://www.epa.gov/septic)

EPA



# Instagram

**biomicrobics** • Follow

## SepticSmart Week 2020



Save the Date!  
September 14-18, 2020

Plan ahead for SepticSmart Week! EPA's annual event focused on how to care for and maintain your septic system.

Visit [www.epa.gov/septic](http://www.epa.gov/septic) for more information.

**EPA**

105 likes

**biomicrobics** Do you have a septic system? 1 in 5 U.S. homes do! ... more

**nima\_agr1** I believe that we can change the septic tank with local waste water treatment plant!!!the waste water is gray gold and if you recycle it you can save energy!!!!

September 14, 2020

**rhenvironmentalservices** • Follow



39 likes

**rhenvironmentalservices** Septic Sam is out enjoying a day on the lake reeling his feet before Septic Smart Week. ... more

View all 5 comments

**rhenvironmentalservices** @juliao.1.5 That's a great reward! Thank you for letting me know.

**paige.1.16** just saw someone take a video Jan P from @rhenviro services also took to request!

September 13, 2020

**eschseptic** • Follow  
Public Septic Service, Inc.

## Pump Your Tank!



Ensure your septic tank is pumped at regular intervals as recommended by a professional and/or local permitting authority. Learn more at [www.epa.gov/septic](http://www.epa.gov/septic).

**EPA**

13 likes

**eschseptic** Septic tanks usually need to be pumped every 3 to 4 years, depending on the amount of water use. ... more

September 18, 2020