



**REPORT TO SAANICH PENINSULA WASTEWATER COMMISSION  
MEETING OF THURSDAY, MARCH 16, 2023**

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**SUBJECT**     **Review of Septic Tank Disposal Options for Saanich Peninsula Residents**

**ISSUE SUMMARY**

The Saanich Peninsula Wastewater Commission (SPWWC) directed staff to investigate the feasibility of delivering septic tank waste from Saanich Peninsula residents directly to the Saanich Peninsula Wastewater Treatment Plant (SPWWTP).

**BACKGROUND**

Septic tank waste is the liquid and solid material pumped from a septic tank. The waste consists of the liquid within the tank, surface scum, floatable material and sludge from the bottom that has accumulated since the last pump-out. All septic tank waste in the capital region is transported by private haulers as septage to a private treatment facility (Septage Processing Ltd. [SPL] in Langford) that is under contract with the Capital Regional District (CRD) to receive the region's septage for treatment before discharge to the CRD sewer system. Septage (also called trucked liquid waste) includes septic tank waste, as well as other wastes that do not meet the sewer discharge requirements of CRD Bylaw No. 2922 (Sewer Use Bylaw), such as material from catch basins, portable toilets, oil and grease interceptors, and high-strength brewery and dairy waste.

CRD Bylaw No. 2827 (Septage Disposal Bylaw) sets out the requirement for the disposal of septage at a septage disposal facility (e.g., SPL) and a prohibition for the discharge of septage waste via direct or indirect connection to a sewer or drain except at a septage disposal facility. In addition, the quality criteria for discharge in Bylaw No. 2827 assumes septage is treated prior to discharge to the sewage system.

Discharges into septic systems are not regulated by the requirements of the Sewer Use Bylaw because these systems are not connected to the CRD or municipal sewage infrastructure. CRD Bylaw No. 3479 (Onsite Sewage System Maintenance Bylaw) regulates the maintenance of septic systems in Colwood, Langford, Saanich and View Royal but not the substances discharged into septic systems. Septic system users in the other nine municipalities and three electoral areas of the capital region are served by educational programs on best practices for onsite sewage system maintenance and operation.

There are jurisdictions that accept septic tank waste at their sewage treatment plants or nearby at a transfer station. For example, Metro Vancouver and City of Calgary accept these wastes and either do pre-treatment solids removal or accept waste as a "no tip" discharge to retain solids in the truck for disposal elsewhere. In the capital region, the septage waste facility model was chosen to provide pre-treatment of these high-strength, unregulated, variable wastes before acceptance to municipal and CRD infrastructure. As with regular sewage, the waste may contain obstructive material such as fat, oil and grease, wipes, paper towels, dental floss, and other non-flushable products. The SPWWTP currently has no infrastructure or procedures in place for accepting septic tank waste.

**CONCLUSION**

In the capital region, septic tank waste is collected by private haulers who deliver the waste to a facility in Langford for pre-treatment before discharge to the CRD core area wastewater system. Septic tank waste composition is unregulated, variable in composition and due to the nature of septic tank function, may contain higher-strength waste or higher solids than residential sewage discharge to sanitary sewers. The Saanich Peninsula Wastewater Treatment Plant has no infrastructure in place to accept these wastes from septic waste haulers.

**RECOMMENDATION**

There is no recommendation. This report is for information only.

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