

# ***You and Your Septic System***

## **How It Works**

1. Waste water goes from your house into a septic tank
2. Heavy solids sink to the bottom (bacteria cannot keep up with accumulation, which results in a layer of sludge)
3. Lighter solids float to the top (bacteria breaks down the solids in this layer)
4. The liquid layer goes through a filter (if installed) out of the tank to an absorption field

## **Operating your system**

- Use water conservatively, repair leaking sinks and toilets
- DO NOT drain runoff rain water into system
- DO NOT put toxic chemicals or cat litter into the system
- DO NOT put grease or coffee grounds into the system
- DO NOT put paper products (excluding toilet paper) into the system
- CONSERVATIVE use of a garbage disposal is acceptable, but adds a lot of solids to the system, which may increase the need to pump out your tank
- Using normal household cleaners is okay if used as directed  
If a water softener is used, limit the regeneration frequency
- Avoid septic tank treatments IE: Rid-X, & Roebic; according to the Iowa State Extension Service, there is no scientific proof that these treatments work.

## **Maintaining your system**

- Install a tank outlet filter to help trap solids
- Protect the absorption field: no heavy vehicles; use grass or plants that have short roots, not trees or shrubs
- Pump the system to remove sludge every 2 to 5 years depending on the number of people and amount of solids put into the system
- Periodically check the distribution box, if installed, for sludge seepage (seepage requires a check of the tank and filter)
- Periodically check for even flow through all lines (heaving frost and settling can have an effect on the load each line receives)