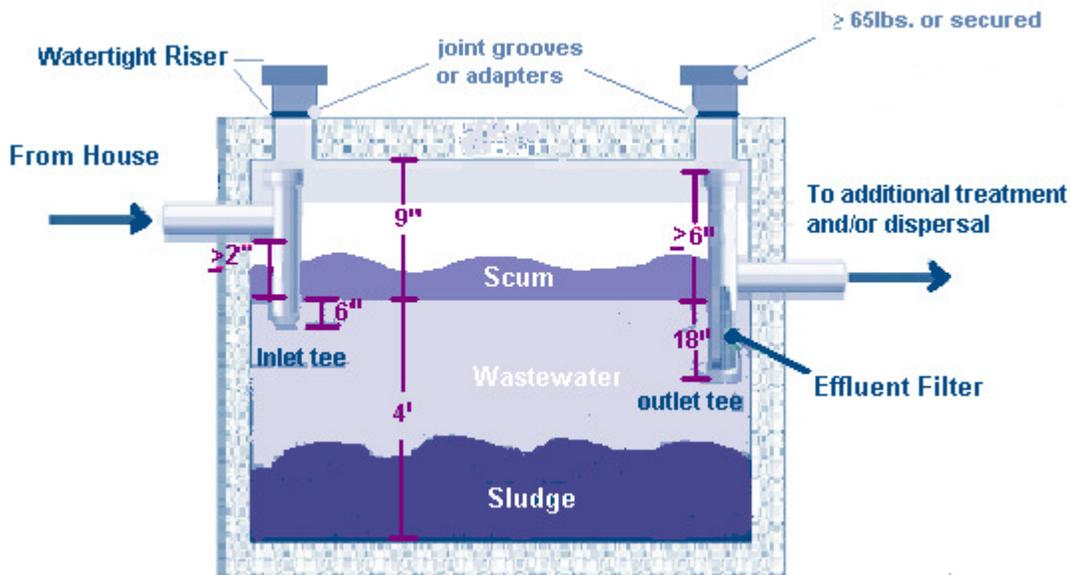


# SEPTIC TANKS

The septic tank is a buried, watertight container typically ranging in size from 1,000 to 2,000 gallons and manufactured from pre-cast concrete, polyethylene plastic, or fiberglass. Treatment begins as the effluent from the house enters the tank where it should stay for at least one day to allow for settling of the solid materials (forming sludge), and separation of fats and greases to the surface (as scum). Compartments and the T-shaped outlets or baffles in the septic tank prevent the sludge and scum from leaving the septic tank and entering the soil absorption portion of the system. The clarified liquid (effluent) flows by gravity or is pumped to various soil absorption components such as leaching trenches, evapotranspiration trenches, drip distribution tubing or to a mound. Microorganisms in the soil provide final treatment by removing harmful bacteria, viruses and nutrients.



## Septic System Maintenance and Responsibility

As the homeowner, maintenance of your septic system is your responsibility. Maintaining your sewage treatment system protects your investment in your home. A malfunctioning or failing sewage treatment system poses a public health nuisance. If properly designed, constructed and maintained, your sewage treatment system can provide long-term and effective treatment of household wastewater. A malfunctioning system can contaminate the surface water and groundwater, decrease soil permeability causing a need for replacement, costing you thousands of dollars.

Septic tanks should be inspected and cleaned by registered septage haulers/pumpers about every 2-5 years depending on size in order to prevent solids from entering the soil absorption area. If the septic tank is neglected and not pumped out when the tank is full, the septic tank will no longer be protecting the soil absorption area from the solids resulting in potential failure and the need for replacement.

During the cleaning process, all the material will be pumped from the tank, the scum layer must be broken up and the sludge layers stirred up into a liquid portion of the tank. It is important to ensure the baffles are in good condition and not damaged after the pumping. The Wood County General Health District licenses and maintains a list of licensed septic pumpers which is available upon request.

