

Frequently Asked Questions Regarding the Borough's Sludge Program

What is sludge?

Sludge is the solid material that settles out in your septic tank or on-site treatment plant. It consists of human waste, food waste and garbage put down sink drains, disposals or into toilets.

Why was the sludge program started?

Due to permitting restrictions, the City's wastewater treatment plant is unable to accept large amounts of sludge from septic systems throughout the Borough. In order to accommodate the disposal of sludge generated in the Borough, a sludge collection, pressing and disposal program for non-City Borough residents was initiated in 2003.

Is this mandatory sludge program legal?

Yes, State and local ordinances and regulation are in place to make the sludge program legal. The Court has upheld recent challenges to the Borough's sludge program.

My system has an aerator and when it was put in I was told it "liquefied the sludge" so only water came out so why do I have to pay if there's no sludge to pump?

Aerators are necessary in a properly operating wastewater system to reduce the amount of sludge produced. Aerators do not eliminate sludge. Even with an aerator, sludge will settle to the bottom of your septic tank and eventually require removal.

What do I get for my \$45 quarterly fee?

The fee covers inspection of your system and every three years, pumping, transporting, processing and disposal of the sludge.

How often will my septic tank be pumped and by whom?

Systems will be pumped once every 3 years. Shoreline Septic Services is currently under contract with the Borough to provide the inspections and septic pumping.

Why pump so often?

Industry standard for pumping is every two to five years. Systems are designed to operate with the first chamber no more than 25% full of sludge. Any more than that means sludge containing wastewater is moving into the rest of the system, contaminating your drain field or outfall. In addition to stinking, a contaminated drain field or outfall pollutes the environment.

What is the status of the sludge facility at Wards Cove?

Construction of the sludge dewatering facility at Wards Cove is almost complete. Once operational, sludge from systems will be pumped into a holding tank then dewatered in a large squeeze press. The dewatered sludge will then be shipped to a landfill in Washington State.

If I live in a Mobile home park and the park has its own treatment processing plant, why must I pay for sludge removal?

The residents of each individual trailer are still generating the same amount of sludge whether they have a private or a community septic system.