

2019 Septic Re-inspection Final Report

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8/30/2019

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Abstract:

The following report is an update on the success of the Septic Re-Inspection Program for the season of 2019. It describes the importance of the re-inspection program as well as the programs findings following the conclusion of the program's 2019 duration.



2019 Septic Re-inspection Program Final Report

Introduction

Seguin Township has been operating a Septic Re-Inspection program under the direction of the North Bay Mattawa Conservation Authority (NBMCA) since the year 2000, with the first inspections taking place in summer 2001. The primary objectives of the program are to prevent pollution from all classes of sewage disposal systems into water sources and all parts of the environment while educating residents of Seguin Township on how to care for their sewage disposal systems. The program is typically carried out by students each summer, under the joint supervision of Seguin Township and the NBMCA, and has been a successful program since its establishment.

This past season, two students (Audra Nicholson and Preston Nielsen) have been the front-line personnel of the Septic Re-Inspection program. Both the supervision under the Seguin Building Department and the GIS-based iPad program have been in place for four years and displaying extensive benefits to date such as easier navigation to remote properties and more efficient inspections resulting in less time per inspection (thus more inspections being completed each season). The Building Department is the governing body for all Part 7 violations (plumbing), while the NBMCA is responsible for Part 8 (on-site sewage). Both governing bodies have been available to provide guidance in their area of work when it is required for the students to expand their knowledge and have any questions from their field work answered.

This year's students were able to complete all of their inspections taking place in the Humphrey and Foley area, as well as additional inspections on the west side of Lake Joseph. In addition to inspections, the students started scanning the old Septic Re-Inspection hard copy files

(used before the iPad program) to provide a digital copy of the files for future use in the program. At mid-season, the students were given the opportunity to develop, present and showcase a “storybook map presentation” to Council which gave the councilors a different perspective on the amount of time and effort that go into this program. Overall, the students overall inspection volume has helped put the program on track for completing septic re-inspections on a 5 year loop, consisting of completing approximately 1000 inspections a season.

Season Findings

The students had a total of 1 179 properties to inspect this year, focused in three main areas: Humphrey, Foley (Hwy 518 corridor) and the west shore of Lake Joseph. The goal was to identify health and safety issues in addition to identifying and informing homeowners of maintenance concerns. At the beginning of the season the students were instructed that maintenance concerns such as overgrowth, objects on the bed or slight erosion did not require follow up. Homeowners with these issues were left a note explaining the issue, how to resolve it and why it is important in preventing damage to their septic system. When a health and safety concern was found, the students would try to achieve compliance by working with the homeowner. Owners were informed of their choices; removing the hazard or altering it to meet the Ontario Building Code.

Findings up to Date

As of the end of the 2019 summer season, the students attended all 1 179 properties that needed to be inspected this season. Out of those 1 179 properties, 46 (3.9%) were placed ‘On Hold’ in need of a follow up, as they were inaccessible or pending action from the property owner in order to reach compliance. 47 (4.0%) of the properties were labeled as ‘No Septic

Found' or 'Vacant Land', meaning that the property did not have any sort of dwelling or septic system. 18 (1.5%) of these properties were labeled as 'Incomplete' due to open septic permits, refusal of entry and properties not in our jurisdiction. As a result, the students labeled 1 068 (90.6%) septic re-inspections as 'Complete'. The completed properties are following the Ontario Building Code requirements for septic systems and have reached compliance with the program by fixing any minor outstanding issues or were passed onto the NBMCA to reach compliance. See Figure 1: Property Status in Appendix A for a pie graph of these statistics.

The types of problems that the students had come across this season can be identified in ten different categories (see Figure 2: Property Findings in Appendix A for a visual representation):

1. Greywater Discharge: properties in which the septic systems were discharging grey water onto the ground. Such violations include sinks, washing machines and outdoor showers that drain onto the ground.
2. System Issue: includes odour, damage to the system or improper closure of the system.
3. Maintenance: septic systems with concerns that do not require any follow-up, such as lack of grass growth or overgrowth on the septic bed.
4. Item on System: structures or heavy objects on the septic system.
5. Refusal of Entry: properties where access to view the septic system was denied by the property owner.
6. Unsafe Outhouse: outhouses that are not built according to Code and either need to be repaired to meet compliance with the Code or taken down.
7. Inaccessible: properties that the students were unable to access due to terrain or other concerns preventing entry (i.e. gates).

8. Permit Issues: properties with no permit attached, has an open septic permit, a revoked permit or missing a Use Permit.
9. Not Our Jurisdiction: properties with septic systems that are regulated by the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks (MOECP).
10. Passed Off to NBMCA: properties which have been passed on to greater authority to reach compliance.

Compliance Rates

The overall compliance rates for the year were very positive. Of the 97 issues that required a follow up, 71 (73.3%) of them have been resolved to date. The remaining properties will be overseen by the Building Department as owners reach compliance during the off-season, then any outstanding issues will be passed on to the students running the Septic Re-Inspection program next season for follow-up.

In addition to the issues found, 39 gated properties were encountered during the 2019 inspections. 22 (56.4%) of these homeowners gave the students permission to bypass such gate to complete the inspection (17 did not).

43 total properties still have an unresolved issue or are still gated. Of those properties, 19 (44.2%) homeowners have been addressed the issue and have the intention of fixing the issue by next year. This leaves 24 (55.8%) property owners who have yet to respond to the letters sent by the students.

Challenges

A considerable challenge students faced was the occasional discrepancy between the alignment of mapping features and current property data, including mailing information. During

the 2019 season, many letters were returned due to incorrect mailing addresses. The students also encountered issues with properties being absent from the mapping program. When either of these issues would happen, the students needed to bring the concern to the attention of Seguin Township and the issue would be resolved from there.

Another challenge the students faces was the limited amount of septic permit copies that were available to them on behalf of both NBMCA as well as Seguin Township. The main concern was that, although NBMCA typically provides all septic files for use, not all were available for use due to timing issues. Therefore, some extra time was spent accessing septic files using the offices of the Parry Sound NBMCA branch, Seguin Township as well as the head NBMCA office in North Bay.

Improvements

In order to improve the discrepancy between the alignment of mapping features and property data, continuous manual updates of property information can be used to keep the information up to date.

More communication between the supervisors of the program would be beneficial in creating less confusion to the students as well as creating a quicker start to the program because all parties would be informed and have a unified vision for the season. A meeting between Seguin, NBMCA and the students at the beginning of their season would be a great way to introduce all parties, outline training procedures, ensure all are on the same page, clarify concerns that have not already been formally addressed and cover the follow-up procedures concerning any from the prior season.

Conclusion

Overall the students have accomplished a remarkable number of septic inspections this season which creates high hopes for the program's success in future seasons. These achievements can also be credited to Mark Vandermeer of Seguin Township and Robin Allen of the NBMCA for their guidance and supervision, as well as Ella Bird for her guidance with program content and Chris Mahon for his technical expertise. With lots of positive feedback from property owners about the program, it can be concluded that residents of Seguin appreciate the hard work that goes into the program in order to maintain the environment, as well as the steps made to ensure the education and importance of a healthy septic system.

Appendix A: Graphs

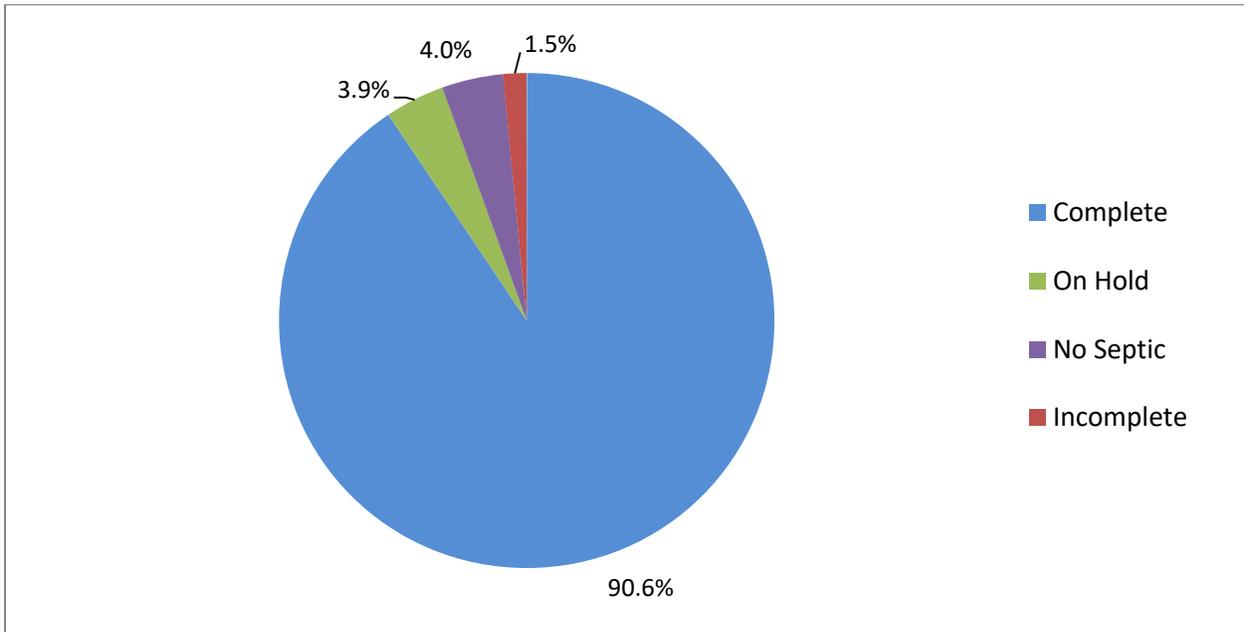


Figure 1: Property Status

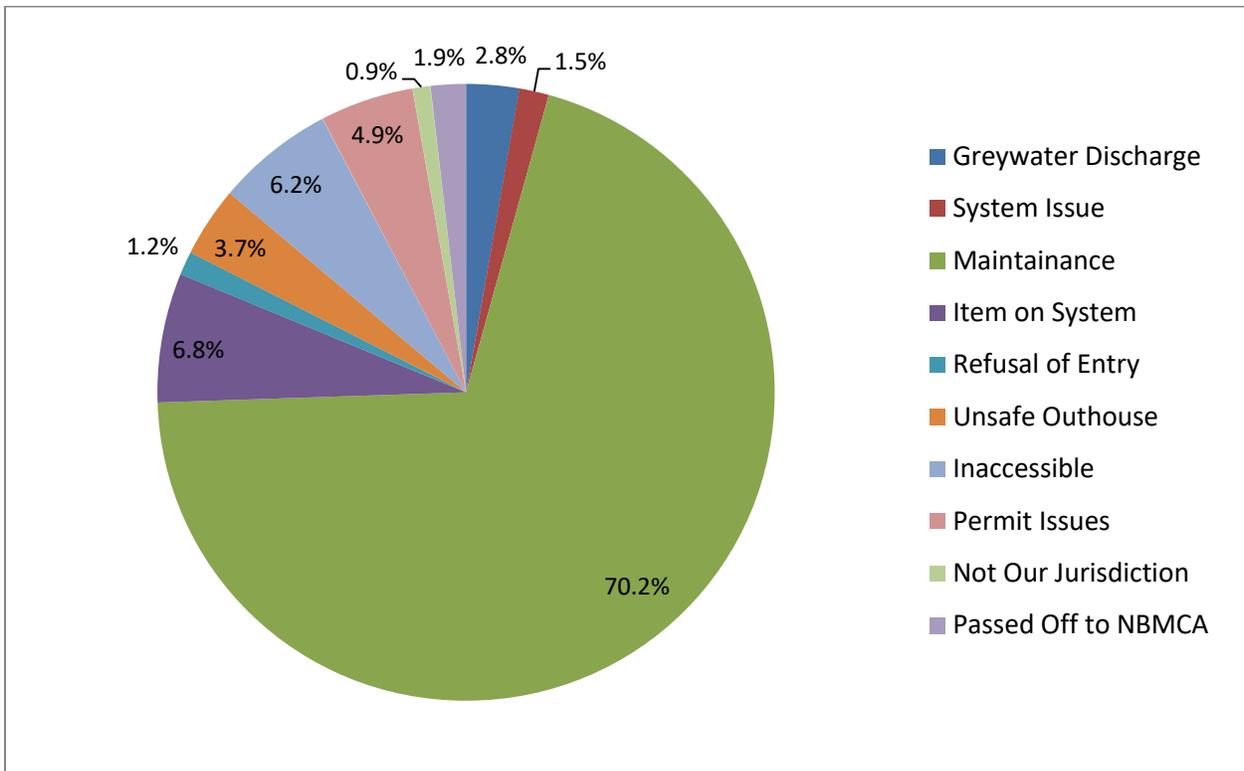


Figure 2: Property Findings