

POLICY SOLUTIONS

Wastewater Treatment

Senate Bill 45

Michigan Senate Bill 45 was introduced January 27, 2009 by Senators Birkholz, Allen, Pappageorge and Kahn and referred to the Committee on Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs. This bill would amend 1994 PA 451 which is the “Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act”, by adding Part 50 dealing with On-site Wastewater Treatment Systems.

This bill would require that beginning January 1, 2010 the owner of certain on-site wastewater treatment systems obtain an inspection of the system at least every ten years. These inspections could be done by the local health department or private sector inspectors certified by the local health department. The ten year cycle would begin with systems permitted for use by local health departments on or after January 1, 2010.

Senate Bill 45 defines both conventional and alternative on-site wastewater treatment systems. In conducting inspections of conventional systems the inspector shall locate and inspect the septic tank, observe the location of the system looking for surface drainage problems and check for illicit discharges into waterways, wetlands or ditches. Alternative systems are inspected to determine if they are operating as designed and to whether or not the system is causing a threat to public health or safety.

Impact on the Health Department

Section 5008 of the bill states that beginning July 1, 2010 that a person shall not install and alternative system unless that type of alternative system has been approved for use in this state by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality. A system will be set up to review systems that are proposing new technology. A technical review committee will be established. This process could well be a valuable resource for local health departments that are unable to review proposals for alternative type systems. It will also encourage consistency between local health departments. Long-term, it should allow development with septic systems in areas currently not buildable, helping Michigan’s economy.

If implemented the inspection program will begin the long-term inspection of permitted septic systems in Michigan to determine they are working properly. This will ensure that valuable water resources are protected which will allow us to promote Michigan as a place to visit and live.

