Solutions to Nitrogen Pollution: Installation of Nitrogen Reducing Septic Systems

Layer Cake Demonstration Project Buzzards Bay Watershed April 17, 2018



www.savebuzzardsbay.org

Layer Cake Demonstration Project Agenda & Speakers

12:00 p.m. Check-in & Lunch

3:15 p.m.

- 12:30 p.m. Project Background: Maureen Thomas, BBC
- 12:45 p.m. Technology: George Heufelder, MASSTC
- 1:15 p.m. Design and Permitting: Brian Grady, G.A.F. Engineering
- **1:45 p.m.** Installation: George Heufelder
- 2:15 p.m. Homeowners Perspective: Wendy Pires, Wareham
- 2:30 p.m. Results & Costs: George Heufelder
 - Wrap up & Questions
- 4:30 p.m. Optional Field Tour in Acushnet 73 South Main Street



Southeast New England Watershed Grant Program



THE UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND

12 Volunteers





Nitrogen Pollution Problem



Acushnet River

Eel Pond, Bourne

Wild Harbor River, Falmouth

Mark's Cove, Wareham



Eelgrass







Photo credit: Dr. Joseph Costa & George Hampson

Solutions to Nitrogen Pollution

- Sewering
- Nitrogen reducing septic systems
 - Proprietary I/A systems
 - Non-proprietary I/A systems like the Layer Cake



Layered Soil Treatment Areas (LSTAs) a.k.a. Layer Cakes

- Technology transfer from other parts of country
- TN Removal rates of up to 90% in leachfield
- Passive, non-proprietary system with one pump
- Cost savings
- Simple & easy to maintain
- Sustainable

Selection of Participants

- Single family home?
- # of bedrooms?

- Type & age of septic system?
- Septic problems?
- Year round or seasonal?
- Access issues?
- Rented? Lot size?
- How many occupants?
- House coverage?

Demonstration Project Process

- 12 homeowner partners
- \$10,000 subsidy
- Homeowner signs contract with BCDHE
- Selection of engineer
- Design of system
- Permitting process

- Selection of installer & installation
- 2 years of BCDHE inspection, maintenance, & monitoring
- I/A system recorded on deed
- Owner responsible after 2 years

Buzzards Bay Watershed

Buzzards Bay Participants

- Acushnet
- Dartmouth
- Fairhaven
- Falmouth (2)
- Tisbury
- Wareham (2)
- Westport



🇖 Map prepared by: Buzzards Bay National Estuary Program, 2870 Cranberry Highway, East Wareham, MA 02538 March 7, 2013



Collaborative Effort

- Damann L. Anderson, P.E., a researcher of passive nitrogen removal systems for the State of Florida Onsite Sewage Nitrogen Reduction Study (FOSNRS);
- George Loomis, an onsite septic system specialist and published author from the University of Rhode Island;
- Dr. Will Robertson of the University of Waterloo;
- Jose Amador, a soil scientist at the University of Rhode Island;
- John Eliasson with the Wastewater Management Section of Washington State Department of Health's Division of Environmental Public Health
- More recently, researchers at Stony Brook University, NY





To examine all elements of successful non-proprietary onsite denitrification projects and determine how to adjust the design features to work in our particular climatological and geological setting.

To determine whether the principles used in these projects will allow a design that is economical and feasible to install in Barnstable County.



A closer look at nitrogen removal in the standard soil absorption system

When a soil absorption system is placed in the C Horizon and that horizon is predominantly sand, nitrification occurs within the first six inches of percolation but there is <u>limited</u> <u>denitrification</u> due to a carbon limitation and lack of anoxic conditions

Standard leaching trench Septic Tank N_{2 (gas)} NO₃⁻ NO₂⁻ NO₃⁻ NO₂- NO₃ **Generally in sand** $NO_3^- NO_3^-$ NO₃⁻ NO₂there is a 20-30% NO₃⁻ NO₃ NO₃-NO₃⁻ removal of total **Groundwater Flow** nitrogen

The prevailing theory is that the limited nitrogen removal in soil occurs when nitrified effluent encounters anoxic micro-zones in the soil where there is sufficient carbon to support denitrifying bacteria.









Then we could...



Reduce the nitrate to nitrogen gas and allow it to exit the system – a process called denitrification



Nitrate



Groundwater Flow

So, where could we get the carbon? Carbon 12.0107

A Blast from the Past





EPA features a profile system that interrupts nitrified percolate and supplies carbon for denitrification Source:

EPA 1980 ONSITE WASTEWATER TREATMENT AND DISPOSAL DESIGN MANUAL



In essence they created a bathtub full of gravel 5 ft. beneath a standard SAS through which the nitrified effluent had to pass and introduced a carbon source (methanol) in order to denitrify the percolate,







Another Source (Right under our nose)

Wood in various forms represents a slow release form of carbon for use by the bacteria involved in <u>denitrification</u>







This is not new



Permeable Reactive Barriers (PRB)



Denitrification Activity, Wood Loss, and N2O Emissions over 9 Years from a Wood Chip Bioreactor

Long-Term Performance of In Situ Reactive **Barriers for Nitrate Remediation**

by W.D. Robertson^{a,} D.W. Blowes^{a,}, C.J. Ptacek^{a,}, and J.A. Cherry^a

Comparing Carbon Substrates for Denitrification of Subsurface Drainage Water

Article /// Journal of Environmental Quality · May 2006

Woodchip barriers widely used in agricultural settings

Journal of Environmental Quality SPECIAL SECTION MOVING DENITRIFYING BIOREACTORS BEYOND PROOF OF CONCEPT

Temperature and Substrate Control Woodchip Bioreactor Performance in Reducing Tile Nitrate Loads in East-Central Illinois

Mark B. David,* Lowell E. Gentry, Richard A. Cooke, and Stephanie M. Herbstritt

A Brief Data Summary of Experiments Performed at Massachusetts Alternative Septic System Test Center



Experiments with <u>three</u> different designs

Design 1 of Three Basic Designs



Denitrification is facilitated by a layer of sand mixed with sawdust placed below the nitrification layer



Design 2 of Three Basic Designs

The containment liner provided a saturated area that held water and occluded oxygen







(saturated)



Design 2 & 3 require an additional disposal site

"Everything should be made as simple as possible, but not simpler"





DISPERSAL NITRIFICATION DENITRIFICATION

DISPOSAL
Simple layered system (no liner)



Design 1 Simple layered system (no liner)



Simple layered system (no liner) **Design 1** Sampling and discharge sump North lysimeters South lysimeters 6-8" loam * GEOMAT 18" Sand 18" Sand/Sawdust mix Pan Lysimeters 5 + ft. of Sand contained in existing liner (simulates native soil) **Sampling Sump**

Simple layered system (no liner)



Average TN since Sept 2016 – May 2017 – 9.9 mg/L Average TN since June 6, 2017 – 4.7 mg/L day 325





Simple layered system (no liner)



Average TN below system 7.6 mg/L (6.9 – 8.3 mg/L TN, p=.05)

The effect of temperature



Temperature (deg C) with Total Nitrogen and Nitrate beneath a sand/silt/sawdust layered system



The effect of temperature



Temperature (deg C) with Total Nitrogen and Nitrate beneath a sand/silt/sawdust layered system



As temperature decreases, TN increases

So practically what does it look like? How is it constructed?

Simple layered system (no liner)





Full-scale layered system

INDA

160.09

Sawdust sand-silt

mix

Place denitrification layer material (sawdust-sand-silt mix)

Simple layered system (no liner)

HYUNDAI

"Marry" denitrification layer material to nitrification material layer

Simple layered system (no liner)

Nitrification layer

Denitrification layer

Simple layered system (no liner)



Field area levelled and made ready for distribution piping

Low-pressure distribution piping placed



Simple layered system (no liner)



Final grade over soil treatment area



Grass planted over soil treatment area

Simple layered system (no liner)

Grass over soil treatment area – Season 2

Example 2 Still Design 1

Simple layered system (no liner)

Loamy-sand nitrification layer

Loamy-sand sawdust mix denitrification layer

Sand base

Simple layered system (no liner)



Full-scale layered system (2)

Leveled soil treatment unit prior to placement of low-pressure piping

Simple layered system (no liner)



Simple layered system (no liner)















The container provided a saturated area that held water and occluded oxygen



Conclusions



Design 1

- Easiest to install
- Overall 75%+ removal
- Uncertain media life



Design 2

- Liner required
- Overall 75%+ removal
- Final disposal required
- More certain media life



Design 3

- Overall 85-90% removal
- Final disposal required
- More certain media life
- Easy access for media replacement

Questions?



George Heufelder M.S., R.S.

Barnstable County Department of Health and Environment Massachusetts Alternative Septic System Test Center MASSTC.org email gheufelder@barnstablecounty.org

Design & Permitting



Site Suitability Considerations

- Soils
- Groundwater elevation
- Lot size
- House coverage



 ~150 SF of leach area/bedroom plus the septic tank and pump chamber area

Conventional vs. Layer Cake Design

- Shallow leach field 4 feet vs. 5 feet
- Less over dig 12 inches vs. 5 feet
- Depth to groundwater relief with GeoMat
- Monitoring & pan lysimeters
- Pump chamber for 1 pump & electrical panel for low pressure timed dosing

Cross Section



Pan Lysimeter Locations





GeoMat Longitudinal Cross Section



Massachusetts

September 2017



Patents: www.geomatrixsystems.com -GeoMat is a trademark of Geomatrix Systems, LLC

GeoMat[™] Leaching Systems

Design Manual for Pressure and Gravity Applications


Pipe & Pump Calculator

Windows 2000/XP/Vista Version 1.0

Software for calculating pressure distribution requirements for Geomatrix Products

Geomatrix Systems, LLC 888+764-5247 www.geomatrixsystems.com

GeoMat System Parameters

File Edit Tools Project Help



Calculation Minimum Flow Rate per Orifice 0.87 gpm Number of Orifices per Zone 22 Total Flow Rate per Zone 19.6 gpm Number of Laterals per Zone 2 % Flow Differential 1st and Last Orifice % 8.5 Static Heads Lift to Manifold 5 feet Residual Head at Last Orifice 4.0 feet Frictional Head Losses Head Loss in Perforated Laterals 0.9 feet Head Loss in Non-Perforated Laterals 0.0 feet Head Loss through Distributing Valve 0.0 feet Head Loss in Manifold 0.0 feet Head Loss in Transport Pipe 0.7 feet Head Loss through Discharge 0.8 feet Head Loss through Flow Meter 0.0 feet

'Add-on' Friction Losses

0.0

feet



DEP I/A Technology Approvals for GeoMat

- Remedial Use Approval for upgrade or replacement of existing failed or nonconforming systems
- General Use Approval for addition to a fully compliant Title 5 system or being built in compliance with new construction requirements

https://www.mass.gov/guides/title-5-innovativealternativetechnology-approval-letters

Permits

- Board of Health
- Conservation if needed
- MassDEP pilot approval
- ~3 months altogether
- Some towns grant fee waivers to support innovative technology

Mixing sand & sawdust



Installation















Installation of pan lysimeters by BCDHE



Source: BCDHE & MASSTC Fact Sheet: Construction Summary for Layered Soil Treatment Area (LSTA) to be installed under the Demonstration Project – A primer for board of health members, septic system designers and installers

Peastone Layer



Compaction of sand-sawdust 50-50% mix

Setting up laterals

Connecting laterals into GeoMat

Laying out the field



Shallow distribution







Pump chamber

Ball valve M D-1785 NSF: pw-G DWV ASTM D-2665 NSF. dwv E NY11:09 04-11-15

CH-40 10 NATIONAL N/0 2" SCH 40 PLUMB-RITE





Homeowner Perspective from Wareham

2013 Board of Health Water Quality Protection Regs. Established WQ Protection Zone within 500 feet of any surface water

- New Construction 150-foot setback for new leachfields & N-reducing system with TN annual average < or =19 mg/L
- Existing & Expanded Systems increase in flow & failed systems, including cesspools, requires N-reducing system with TN annual average < or =19 mg/L











Layer Cake Leachfield Location

Septic Tank & Pump Chamber Location

THURSDAY OF








Results - MASSTC



Layer Cake Costs

- Design & permitting costs ~\$2,500 \$5,200
- Installation cost ~\$20,000 \$41,000
- Installation cost comparison conventional vs. layer cake system - \$2,500 difference (\$18,000 - \$20,500)

Resources

- Layer Cake Fact Sheets
- MA GeoMat Design Manual
- DEP GeoMat Approvals (General & Remedial)
- Towns throughout the watershed where layer cakes are being installed (Acushnet, Dartmouth, Fairhaven, Falmouth, Vineyard Haven, Wareham, Westport)
- Project Team, including volunteer homeowners
- Forthcoming BBC Brochure

Questions?