

The Beach Hut In Hampton Bays To Get Advanced Septic System



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By [Amanda Bernocco](#)

Suffolk County officials made a pit stop at Meschutt Beach in Hampton Bays last week to discuss a new septic system for The Beach Hut restaurant located in the park.

The new system that is projected to be installed at the county park at the end of 2016 will be more advanced than the current county standard, said Peter Scully, a representative for Suffolk County Executive Steve Bellone, during the visit on Thursday, September 24.

Current law requires restaurant septic systems to have septic tanks and grease traps—both of which The Beach Hut now lacks. The new system, according to Mr. Scully, will be more resilient, better at filtering out nitrogen from wastewater and better at breaking down grease.

“I wanted to go up to county standards—and they are taking it a step further,” Suffolk County Legislator Jay Schneiderman said of the new initiative.

Mr. Schneiderman said the upgrades are still in the planning stages and that the county has yet to hire a contractor for the project. He estimated that the work would cost about \$300,000 and be funded through the county’s Assessment Stabilization Reserve Fund.

Mr. Scully emphasized that the cost is only an approximation as the county plans to ask several companies to submit proposals that include a price, spell out how their system will be resilient to storms, how capable it would be in reducing nitrogen concentrations to 19 milliliters per liter or below, and how efficient it would be at breaking down restaurant waste. He said the county will solicit proposals from mid-October through November.

The approved septic system must be able to significantly reduce the amount of nitrogen in wastewater before it enters the ground. Specifically, treated wastewater must contain 19 milliliters of nitrogen per liter or less to be considered, Mr. Schneiderman said. Current county law states that up to 50 milliliters of nitrogen could be present in every liter of wastewater that is discharged.

“That’s a vast improvement,” said Kevin McAllister, the founder of Defend H2O, a nonprofit focused on water quality issues and a former Peconic Baykeeper for 16

years, after learning that the county was going to upgrade the septic system at Meschutt Beach.

"It's certainly an improvement over the last system," he continued. "And I think it's important that the county demonstrates leadership in transitioning all these systems to be state-of-the-art."

When county officials visited Meschutt Beach last week it was part of a larger "Septic Tour" that included four homes in western Suffolk that are testing pilot septic systems that are not yet approved by the county, devices that Mr. Scully refers to as "innovative advanced treatment systems that are better at reducing nitrogen."

If those new systems, which include the Hydro-Action, Orenco and Norweco brands, prove effective, Mr. Scully said the county would likely sign off on their widespread utilization.

The Hydro-Action system, which is manufactured by Septic Systems Inc. in Illinois, cleans wastewater without introducing chemicals, according to the company. Instead, the water is filtered three times to ensure that as many toxins as possible are extracted before disposal. A similar advanced septic system manufactured by Orenco Systems in Oregon is designed to reduce nitrogen output by killing most of the bacteria present in wastewater. Meanwhile, Norweco, an Ohio-based company, is now pushing a system that it says can also significantly reduce the amount of toxins in wastewater.

"They are not approved for use in Suffolk County yet because we want to test if they actually work," Mr. Scully said of the three new systems.

Mr. Scully noted that last week's tour happened as part of National Septic Smart Week, created three years earlier by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. EPA named September 21 through 25 National Septic Smart Week to spread awareness about how septic systems can hurt the environment if not maintained properly, according to the agency's website.

Mr. Schneiderman said Meschutt Beach was added to the tour because of an incident in July when one of the eight cesspools servicing The Beach Hut overflowed while a crowd of nearly 200 people was dining at the waterfront restaurant. The facility's current septic system lacks both septic tanks and grease traps because it was likely installed in the 1970s, before county law required such systems to include those elements, Walter Hilbert, chief of the Office of Wastewater Management within the Suffolk County Department of Health Services, previously stated.

Robert Marsilio, who has been the manager at The Beach Hut at Meschutt for 16 years, ever since his father, Fred Marsilio, opened for business there, said he's happy to see that the county is now looking to upgrade the system. He noted that this initiative has been "snowballing" since the cesspool backup on July 10.

"Hopefully, something good is going to come out of all of this," Mr. Marsilio said. "We're probably going to deal with the [old] system next year, but at least now we're prepared."

Before last summer's leak, Mr. Marsilio had crews from Brothers Three Cesspool in Hampton Bays pump the on-site cesspools once every three weeks. After the incident, Mr. Marsilio said he brings the crews in once a week as a precaution. He said he also personally checks under the sewer lids each day to make sure there are no blockages or backups.

Kevin McDonald, who works in government relations for The Nature Conservancy and chairs the Hampton Bays Citizens Advisory Committee, said he was happy to learn the county is updating the septic system.

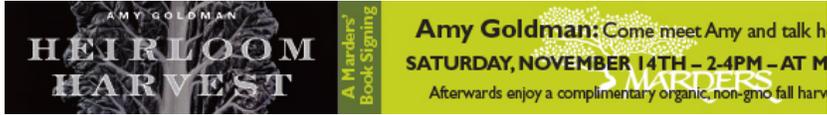
"I want to compliment the county folks who were involved in this decision to take an opportunity [to upgrade] a failed septic system that was probably put in in the '60s," Mr. McDonald said. "It was put at the edge of the water, probably contributing to nitrogen flow into the Peconic."

"This shows the county's commitment to changing practices to improve water quality," he added.

Contributing to the need for an upgraded septic system is the fact that the nearby county park has grown in popularity over the years, drawing more and more visitors each summer. "It used to be a small neighborhood beach," Mr. Scully said, "but that's not what it is anymore."

Mr. McDonald added that the the failure of the park's septic system this past summer could be attributed to the park's popularity.

"It's just really compact and available," Mr. McDonald said of Meschutt. "That park has grown considerably ... and if you've ever been there in the summertime you'd find 150 people listening to music and having drinks. And most of those people end up christening the thrones in the restrooms."



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