

# The Suffolk Times.

## 19 Suffolk Homeowners to Receive Free Denitrification Systems

by [Carrie Miller](#) | 10/22/2014 8:00 AM

It's no Mega Millions, but 19 Suffolk County homeowners will soon hit the lottery in a county drawing to test new wastewater treatment systems.

Suffolk County officials are seeking homeowners willing to offer their properties as testing sites for advanced wastewater treatment systems, in hopes of finding a system suitable for use in individual homes.

County Executive Steve Bellone announced last week that the county will conduct a lottery to select 19 homeowners who will receive free advanced wastewater treatment systems as part of a pilot demonstration program study.

“Advanced wastewater treatment systems for homeowners are a vital part of the solution to our water quality crisis. While this is not the single solution, this is one of the initiatives we are doing to reclaim our water here in Suffolk County,” Mr. Bellone said in an announcement about the lottery.

During his State of the County address in March, Mr. Bellone pinpointed nitrogen pollution as “the greatest crisis [the] county has faced in generations,” noting that nearly 70 percent of county homeowners are using outdated septic systems for wastewater. These systems often don't allow enough time for nitrogen in the waste to break down before the effluent enters nearby groundwater. Algae then feeds on the nitrogen, multiplying to form harmful algal blooms that damage aquatic ecosystems.

Four different manufacturers are donating the 19 systems and will pay for installation as well as maintenance costs for the first five years — a value of approximately \$15,000 per system.

Homeowners will be responsible for the cost of electricity to run the systems, which is expected to range anywhere from \$5 to \$20 a month, and must be willing to allow county health officials on their property for system testing, monitoring and maintenance visits. Small groups must also be allowed to visit for educational purposes, according to the county website.

Systems from three manufacturers are designed for underground installation; the fourth is installed above ground in an area such as a basement, garage or shed, and discharges the effluent to an underground leaching system, according to the program website.

While testing the efficiency of these systems, officials from the county's Department of Labor, Licensing and Consumer Affairs will be developing “an extensive job training program to bring more septic and wastewater-oriented employment opportunities to Suffolk County,” according to a release about the program.

The majority of the systems being tested are already in use in a number of Northeastern states. The systems were observed by county experts on a tour of septic programs conducted in April, according to a county report.

Adrienne Esposito, executive director of Citizens Campaign for the Environment, said the “program initiates a critical component in the fight to protect our island's future.”

“Upgrading our cesspools and septic systems will allow us to begin the essential journey to restoring the quality of our drinking water supply and protecting our beaches and bays from the increasing damage caused by nitrogen from sewage,” she said.

Applications for the lottery can be found at [suffolkcountyny.gov](http://suffolkcountyny.gov). The deadline to apply is Friday, Nov. 14, at 4:30 p.m. Homeowners are asked to email questions and the completed application to [SepticDemo@SuffolkCountyNY.gov](mailto:SepticDemo@SuffolkCountyNY.gov).

Those who wish to submit the application by mail can use the following address: Suffolk County Department of Public Works, Attn: Septic Demonstration Program Application, 335 Yaphank Ave., Yaphank, NY 11980.

[cmiller@timesreview.com](mailto:cmiller@timesreview.com)