

Southampton Town Trustee Upgrades Septic System To Reduce Nitrogen Footprint



PHOTO GALLERY

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By [Greg Wehner](#)

One Southampton Town Trustee has taken a big step toward reducing his household's nitrogen footprint by installing a new state-of-the-art septic system that trims the amount of nitrogen that leaches into waterways by 18 to 25 percent, compared to conventional systems.

Trustee Bill Pell had the septic system put in at his property in Tuckahoe on February 16, making it the first of its kind to be installed in the Town of Southampton without the help of a government subsidy under a pilot program.

"As a Southampton Town Trustee, I am aware of the results of nitrates to our environment and the effects it can have on our waterways," Mr. Pell said last week. "I am excited to be the first homeowner to implement this system in my home. I hope others follow suit."

According to the Peconic Estuary Program, nitrogen is the primary nutrient of concern in the Peconic Estuary System, and excessive nutrients in the water lead to algae blooms that reduce dissolved oxygen, leading to hazardous conditions for fish and other marine life.

While typical septic systems have a 1,000-gallon capacity, Mr. Pell's advanced system has a 1,250-gallon capacity, is watertight and has an effluent filter inside that traps all solids. The system must be pumped out every three to five years, just like a conventional system, he said.

Bryan McGowan, of Southampton-based Advanced Wastewater Solutions, said Mr. Pell's system was installed with an effluent pump between the septic tank and a shallow drain field.

The drain field is made up of 15 geotextile sand filters and a biomat that allows microbes to grow and aeration to take place. When the filtered product leaves the system and enters the ground, it benefits the vegetation and lawn around the system.

Suffolk County mandates that older systems can put out no more than 19 milligrams per liter of nitrogen, according to Mr. McGowan. The new system increases the denitrification process by between 18 and 25 percent, and the cost is in the same ballpark as the old systems.

Mr. McGowan said the newer systems can cost anywhere from \$15,000 to \$30,000, compared to current systems that run between \$12,000 and \$20,000.

Over the last couple of weeks, both East Hampton Town Supervisor Larry Cantwell and Southampton Town Supervisor Jay Schneiderman started putting in measures to require new commercial and residential construction, as well as major renovation projects, to include the installation of the latest nitrogen-reducing septic systems. North Haven Mayor Jeffrey Sander also announced that he wants to do the same and require new construction along the water have these types of systems put in place. Mr. Pell is just trying to stay one step ahead.



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