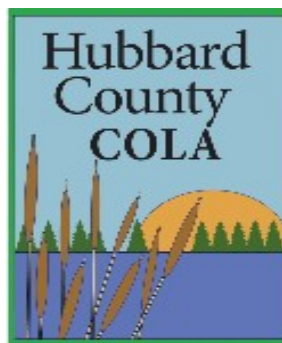


Individual Sewage Treatment Systems (ISTS)

The COLA Call

by Steve Hall



Individual Sewage Treatment Systems (ISTS)

We here in lake country are proud of our lake, river and stream water quality. It is nice to see your toes when you wade into the water, I have been in places where you can't. One of the things that threatens our water quality is the introduction of phosphorous. It has been said that one pound of phosphorous can generate approximately 500 pounds of algae and excess plant growth when it is allowed to get into our lakes, streams and rivers. Surface water phosphorous contamination can come from many sources including fertilizers used in agriculture, water discharges from sewage treatment facilities and also from improperly maintained Individual Sewage Treatment Systems (ISTS). Since most of us living in the country or around the

lake have our own ISTS I think it is important that we all do what is necessary to make sure that they are not part of the phosphorous problem.

So what can we all do? First, make sure that your ISTS is in compliance with current Hubbard County regulations. If you are not sure of the condition of your system, have it inspected. Under Minnesota law every owner of an ISTS is required to inspect their system at an interval not to exceed three years. Second, if you are a full time resident maintain your ISTS by having the tank(s) pumped every two years. If you are a seasonal resident have your tank(s) pumped every three years . According to the Wisconsin Department of Commerce and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency some other tips for maintaining your ISTS include:

- 1.) Conserve and spread out water usage by washing one or two loads of laundry in a day rather than three or more loads in a day.
- 2.) Use low-flow shower heads and low volume toilets to reduce water usage. Take a short shower instead of taking a bath and turn off the water when you soap up. Turn off the faucet when shaving or brushing your teeth.
- 3.) Do not flush diapers, feminine hygiene products, paper towels or facial tissues. Dispose of these items as solid waste.
- 4.) Do not overuse your garbage disposal and do not put grease or oils down the drain.
- 5.) Use liquid rather than powdered detergents as powders have "fillers" that add solids.
- 6.) Do not dump pesticides, paint, thinners, solvents or excess medications into your ISTS.
- 7.) Avoid using toilet cleaning dispensers that release bleach with each flush. The excess bleach can reduce the populations of bacteria in your tank that breaks down waste.
- 8.) Divert water from roofs or other sources away from the drain field area.
- 9.) Do not drive vehicles over the drain field and do not build anything over the drain field.
- 10.) Establish and maintain grass or other suitable vegetation over the drain field but do not plant trees or other deep rooted vegetation near the drain field as the roots could clog the pipes.

If we all do the basics of good ISTS compliance and maintenance the risk of phosphorous contamination to our surface waters will be reduced. Living in a world in which so many things appear out of our control here is something that we can control . Will you join me in making a commitment to make a difference?