

Sewage Disposal Dictionary

“Abatement” is the installation, construction, alteration, enlargement, reconstruction, replacement, improvement or reconditioning of any individual sewage disposal system, or the filling in and abandonment of any individual sewage disposal system which cannot be repaired, and/or the construction, alteration, enlargement, reconstruction or replacement of any required building sewer line connecting with a public sewer, so as to eliminate a violation of this chapter.

“Addition or upgrade” is partial or total replacement of a septic system that is functioning properly.

“At-grade system” is a wastewater disposal system dispersal system with a discharge point located at the preconstruction grade (ground surface elevation). The discharge from an at-grade system is always subsurface.

“Average annual rainfall” is the average of the annual amount of precipitation for a location over a year as measured by the nearest National Weather Service station for the preceding three decades. For example the data set used to make a determination in 2012 would be the data from 1981 to 2010.

“Basin Plan” is the same as “water quality control plan” as defined in Division 7 (commencing with Section 13000) of the Water Code. Basin Plans are adopted by each Regional Water Board, approved by the State Water Board and the Office of Administrative Law, and identify surface water and groundwater bodies within each Region’s boundaries and establish, for each, its respective beneficial uses and water quality objectives. Copies are available from the Regional Water Boards, electronically at each Regional Water Boards website, or at the State Water Board’s Plans and Policies web page (http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/plans_policies/).

“Bedrock” is the rock, usually solid, that underlies soil or other unconsolidated, surficial material.

“Bedroom” is any space in the conditioned (heated) area of a dwelling unit which is 70 square feet and greater in size and which is an exterior room shall be counted as a bedroom unless it is one of the following:

- a. Hall;
- b. Bathroom;
- c. Kitchen;
- d. Living room (maximum of one per dwelling unit);
- e. Dining room/family room (opening off of the kitchen or living room, maximum of one per dwelling unit);
- f. Family Room (opening off of the kitchen or living room, maximum of one per dwelling unit);
- g. Breakfast Nook (opening off kitchen, maximum of one per dwelling unit);

- h. Pantry (maximum of one per dwelling unit);
- i. Laundry room;
- j. Closest/dressing room opening off of a bedroom.

Sewing rooms, dens, offices, studios, lofts, game rooms, and any other exterior room 70 square feet and greater in size shall be counted as bedrooms regardless of whether they are entered through a door, unless the room is other exempted.

The planning director may grant exceptions if, in his/her discretion, a room cannot, by its design, function as a bedroom.

“Biochemical Oxygen Demand” or **“BOD”** is the amount of dissolved oxygen that must be present in wastewater in order for microorganisms to decompose the organic matter in the wastewater, used as a measure of the degree of contamination. Results are reported in mg/L.

“BOD5” is a measurement of the biochemical oxygen demand of a wastewater sample over a 5-day period.

“Cesspool” is an excavation in the ground receiving domestic wastewater, designed to retain the organic matter and solids, while allowing the liquids to seep into the soil. Cesspools differ from seepage pits because cesspool systems do not have septic tanks and are not authorized under this Policy. The term cesspool does not include pit-privies and out-houses which are not regulated under this Policy.

“Clay” is a soil particle; the term also refers to a type of soil texture. As a soil particle, clay consists of individual rock or mineral particles in soils having diameters <0.002 mm. As a soil texture, clay is the soil material that is comprised of 40 percent or more clay particles, not more than 45 percent sand and not more than 40 percent silt particles using the USDA soil classification system.

“Cobbles” are rock fragments 76 mm or larger using the USDA soil classification systems.

“Construction” is the installation, major repair, alteration, enlargement, replacement, improvement or relocation of an individual sewage disposal system.

“Curtain drain” is a trench filled with drain rock that is designed to intercept and divert ambient groundwater with surface discharge via piping to another location. Curtain drains are typically used to dewater areas upslope of a leachfield or a foundation and lower the water table. Curtain drains are also known as French drains.

“Department” is the Health Services Agency of the County of Santa Cruz.

“Dispersal system” is a leachfield, seepage pit, mound, at-grade, subsurface drip field, evapotranspiration and infiltration bed, or other type of system for final wastewater treatment and subsurface discharge.

“Domestic wastewater” is wastewater with a measured strength less than high-strength wastewater and is the type of wastewater normally discharged from, or similar to, that discharged from plumbing fixtures, appliances and other household devices including, but not limited to toilets, bathtubs, showers, laundry facilities, dishwashing facilities, and garbage disposals. Domestic wastewater may include wastewater from commercial buildings such as office buildings, retail stores, and some restaurants, or from industrial facilities where the domestic wastewater is segregated from the industrial wastewater. Domestic wastewater may include incidental RV holding tank dumping but does not include wastewater consisting of a significant portion of RV holding tank wastewater such as at RV dump stations.

Domestic wastewater does not include wastewater from industrial processes.

“Domestic well” is a groundwater well that provides water for human consumption and is not regulated by the California Department of Public Health.

“Dump Station” is a facility intended to receive the discharge of wastewater from a holding tank installed on a recreational vehicle. A dump station does not include a full hook-up sewer connection similar to those used at a recreational vehicle park.

“Earthen material” is a substance composed of the earth’s crust (i.e. soil and rock).

“Effluent” is sewage, water, or other liquid, partially or completely treated or in its natural state, flowing out of a septic tank, aerobic treatment unit, dispersal system, or other wastewater disposal system component.

“Escherichia coli” is a group of bacteria predominantly inhabiting the intestines of humans or other warm-blooded animals, but also occasionally found elsewhere. Used as an indicator of human fecal contamination.

“Finding of compliance” is a determination by the Health Officer that the design and specifications for an individual sewage disposal system to serve a property for which it is intended are in conformance with standards in effect at the time the finding is made.

“Flowing water body” is a body of running water flowing over the earth in a natural water course, where the movement of the water is readily discernible or if water is not present it is apparent from review of the geology that when present it does flow, such as in an ephemeral drainage, creek, stream, or river.

“Groundwater” is water below the land surface that is at or above atmospheric pressure.

“Health Officer” is the Santa Cruz County Health Officer or authorized representative.

“High-strength wastewater” is wastewater having a 30-day average concentration of biochemical oxygen demand (BOD) greater than 300 milligrams-per-liter (mg/L) or of

total suspended solids (TSS) greater than 330 mg/L or a fats, oil, and grease (FOG) concentration greater than 100mg/L prior to the septic tank or other wastewater disposal system treatment component.

“**IAPMO**” is the International Association of Plumbing and Mechanical Officials.

“**Impaired Water Bodies**” are those surface water bodies or segments thereof that are identified on a list approved first by the State Water Board and then approved by US EPA pursuant to Section 303(d) of the federal Clean Water Act.

“**Individual sewage disposal system**” (also called “**Onsite Wastewater Treatment System**”) is a septic tank and drainfield or other approved means of sanitary disposal of sewage. This may include any of the following types of systems:

“**Conventional system**” is an individual sewage disposal system which utilizes a septic tank (with or without a lift pump) and leaching trenches or pits.

“**Standard system**” is a conventional system which is constructed in accordance with the specifications for a standard system as described in SCCC 7.38.095 through 7.38.180.

“**Nonstandard system**” is a system which is not in conformance with all the standards contained in SCCC 7.38.095 through 7.38.180. Nonstandard systems include alternative systems, nonconforming systems and haulaway systems.

“**Nonconforming sewage disposal system**” is a conventional sewage disposal system design that provides for insufficient leaching area as described in SCCC 7.38.150(A)(3), that is in soils that percolate in the range 60 to 120 MPI, that requires seasonal haulaway of effluent to function properly and meet required groundwater separation, or which is not in compliance with other requirements for a standard system contained in SCCC 7.38.095 through 7.38.180. Use of a nonconforming system requires use of water conservation devices.

“**Enhanced (frequently called alternative) treatment system**” is an individual sewage disposal system which uses nonconventional technology for enhanced effluent treatment and/or disposal.

“**Haulaway system**” is an existing individual sewage disposal system, for which the Health Officer has ordered that the outlet of the septic tank, or other sewage holding container, be permanently or seasonally sealed, and the accumulated sewage pumped out and hauled away to an approved disposal site.

“**Lot or parcel size**” is the total horizontal area included within the property lines of the lot(s) or parcel(s) upon which an individual sewage disposal system is installed; provided, that the area of any rights-of-way for vehicular access may be deducted for

purposes of determining the size of any lot(s) or parcel(s) having a gross area less than one acre, where the Health Officer has determined that the vehicular access would have an adverse impact on the individual sewage disposal system.

“Major repair” is any kind of alteration or replacement of a malfunctioning individual sewage disposal system except those defined as minor repairs or minor maintenance.

“Minor maintenance” is replacement of septic tank baffles, tees, ells, tops, or sewer lines.

“Minor repair” is replacement of septic tank, installation of greywater sump, or other minimal repair work requiring a minor repair permit as determined by the Health Officer.

“Mottling” is a soil condition that results from oxidizing or reducing minerals due to soil moisture changes from saturated to unsaturated over time. Mottling is characterized by spots or blotches of different colors or shades of color (grays and reds) interspersed within the dominant color as described by the classification system. This soil condition can be indicative of historic seasonal high groundwater level, but the lack of this condition may not demonstrate the absence of groundwater.

“Mound system” is an aboveground dispersal system (covered sand bed with effluent leachfield elevated above original ground surface inside) used to enhance soil treatment, dispersal, and absorption of effluent discharged from a wastewater disposal system treatment unit such as a septic tank. Mound systems have a subsurface discharge.

“Nitrogen” (measured through **Total Nitrogen** a.k.a. **Total N**) is a chemical element used to assess the level of contaminants in wastewater. The Total Nitrogen test is a measure of all forms of nitrogen (for example, nitrate, nitrite, ammonia-N, and organic forms) that are found in a wastewater sample. Results are reported in mg/L.

“NSF” is NSF International (a.k.a. National Sanitation Foundation), a not for profit, non-governmental organization that develops health and safety standards and performs product certification.

“Oil/grease interceptor” is a passive interceptor that has a rate of flow exceeding 50 gallons-per-minute and that is located outside a building. Oil/grease interceptors are used for separating and collecting oil and grease from wastewater.

“Onsite wastewater treatment system” is an individual sewage disposal system, community collection and disposal system, or alternative collection and disposal system, which uses subsurface disposal.

“Percolation test” is a method of testing water absorption of the soil. The test is conducted with clean water and test results can be used to establish the dispersal system design.

“Permit” is a document issued by a local agency that allows the installation and use of a wastewater disposal system, or waste discharge requirements or a waiver of waste discharge requirements that authorizes discharges from a wastewater disposal system.

“Pit-privy”(a.k.a. outhouse, pit-toilet) is self-contained waterless toilet used for disposal of non-water carried human waste; consists of a shelter built above a pit in the ground into which human waste falls.

“Pollutant” is any substance that alters water quality of the waters of the State to a degree that it may potentially affect the beneficial uses of water, as listed in a Basin Plan.

“Projected flows” are wastewater flows into the wastewater disposal system determined in accordance with any of the applicable methods for determining average daily flow in the USEPA Onsite Wastewater Treatment System Manual, 2002, or for Tier 2 in accordance with an approved Local Agency Management Program.

“Public Water System” is a water system regulated by the California Department of Public Health or a Local Primacy Agency pursuant to Chapter 12, Part 4, California Safe Drinking Water Act, Section 116275 (h) of the California Health and Safety Code.

“Public Water Well” is a ground water well serving a public water system. A spring which is not subject to the California Surface Water Treatment Rule (SWTR), CCR, Title 22, sections 64650 through 64666 is a public well.

“Qualified professional” is an individual licensed or certified by a State of California agency to design wastewater disposal systems and practice as professionals for other associated reports, as allowed under their license or registration. Depending on the work to be performed and various licensing and registration requirements, this may include an individual who possesses a registered environmental health specialist certificate or is currently licensed as a professional engineer or professional geologist. For the purposes of performing site evaluations, Soil Scientists certified by the Soil Science Society of America are considered qualified professionals. A local agency may modify this definition as part of its Local Agency Management Program.

“Regional Water Board” is any of the Regional Water Quality Control Boards designated by Water Code Section 13200. Any reference to an action of the Regional Water Board in this Policy also refers to an action of its Executive Officer, including the conducting of public hearings, pursuant to any general or specific delegation under Water Code Section 13223.

“Sand” is a soil particle; this term also refers to a type of soil texture. As a soil particle, sand consists of individual rock or mineral particles in soils having diameters ranging from 0.05 to 2.0 millimeters. As a soil texture, sand is soil that is comprised of 85

percent or more sand particles, with the percentage of silt plus 1.5 times the percentage of clay particles comprising less than 15 percent.

“San Lorenzo water supply watershed” is that area of the San Lorenzo River watershed that contributes surface water flow to the city of Santa Cruz water supply intake located at Tait Street near the city limits. This includes all parts of the San Lorenzo watershed, except the Carbonera and Branciforte Creek Subbasins.

“Seasonal waterway” is a watercourse that flows for a minimum of three months during the course of an average year.

“Seepage pit” is a drilled or dug excavation, three to six feet in diameter, either lined or gravel filled, that receives the effluent discharge from a septic tank or other wastewater disposal system treatment unit for dispersal.

“Septic constraint areas” are those existing lots of record in areas designated as having constraints for individual sewage disposal systems, and as shown on maps of septic constraint areas on file with the Director of Environmental Health. Constraints include areas with noted high groundwater conditions, areas with poor soil conditions or noted septic tank system problems, and lands identified as primary groundwater recharge areas.

“Septic tank” is a watertight, covered receptacle designed for primary treatment of wastewater and constructed to:

1. Receive wastewater discharged from a building;
2. Separate settleable and floating solids from the liquid;
3. Digest organic matter by anaerobic bacterial action;
4. Store digested solids; and
5. Clarify wastewater for further treatment with final subsurface discharge.

“Service provider” is a person capable of operating, monitoring, and maintaining a wastewater disposal system in accordance to this Policy.

“Sewage” is waste substance, liquid or solid, which is associated with human habitation or which contains, or may be contaminated with human or animal excretion or excrement, offal or feculent matter, or matters or substances that may be injurious or dangerous to health.

“Silt” is a soil particle; this term also refers to a type of soil texture. As a soil particle, silt consists of individual rock or mineral particles in soils having diameters ranging from between 0.05 and 0.002 mm. As a soil texture, silt is soil that is comprised as approximately 80 percent or more silt particles and not more than 12 percent clay particles using the USDA soil classification system.

“Single-family dwelling unit” is a structure that is usually occupied by just one household or family and for the purposes of this Policy is expected to generate an average of 250 gallons per day of wastewater.

“Site” is the location of the wastewater disposal system and, where applicable, a reserve dispersal area capable of disposing 100 percent of the design flow from all sources the wastewater disposal system is intended to serve.

“Site Evaluation” is an assessment of the characteristics of the site sufficient to determine its suitability for a wastewater disposal system to meet the requirements of this Policy.

“Soil” is the naturally occurring body of porous mineral and organic materials on the land surface, which is composed of unconsolidated materials, including sand-sized, silt-sized, and clay-sized particles mixed with varying amounts of larger fragments and organic material. In contrast to the underlying rock material, soil is formed over time by the interactions between climate, relief, parent materials and living organisms.

“Soil structure” is the arrangement of primary soil particles into compound particles, peds, or clusters that are separated by natural planes of weakness from adjoining aggregates.

“Soil texture” is the soil class that describes the relative amount of sand, clay, silt and combinations thereof as defined by the classes of the soil textural triangle developed by the USDA (referenced above).

“State Water Board” is the State Water Resources Control Board

“Supplemental treatment” is any wastewater disposal system or component of a wastewater disposal system, except a septic tank or dosing tank, which performs additional wastewater treatment so that the effluent meets a predetermined performance requirement prior to discharge of effluent into the dispersal field.

“Telemetric” is the ability to automatically measure and transmit wastewater disposal system data by wire, radio, or other means.

“TMDL” is the acronym for "total maximum daily load." Section 303(d)(1) of the Clean Water Act requires each State to establish a TMDL for each impaired water body to address the pollutant(s) causing the impairment. In California, TMDLs are usually adopted as Basin Plan amendments and contain implementation plans detailing how water quality standards will be attained.

“Total coliform” is a group of bacteria consisting of several genera belonging to the family Enterobacteriaceae, which includes Escherichia coli bacteria.

“Total Suspended Solids” (TSS) is the measure of the suspended solids in a wastewater sample including inorganic and organic substances. The TSS test measures the concentration of suspended solids in wastewater by measuring the dry weight of a solid material contained in a known volume of a sub-sample of a collected wastewater sample. Results are reported in mg/L.

“Waste discharge requirement” or **“WDR”** is an operation and discharge permit issued for the discharge of waste pursuant to Section 13260 of the California Water Code.

“Water quality constraint area” is the following areas which are located within one mile of intakes used for public water supply and are located within the watersheds of those intakes:

- (a) City of Santa Cruz intakes on Reggiardo, Laguna, and Majors Creeks, and Liddell Spring;
- (b) Bonnymede Mutual intake on Reggiardo Creek;
- (c) Davenport water system intakes on Mill and San Vicente Creeks. [Ord. 4440 §§ 1, 2, 1996; Ord. 4396 § 1, 1995; Ord. 4383 § 1, 1995; Ord. 4317 § 1, 1994; Ord. 4283 § 1, 1993; Ord. 4220 § 2, 1992].

“Winter Water Testing” or **“WWT”** is the measurement and official evaluation of seasonal high groundwater and near surface soil saturation, conducted during annual wet-season test periods on undeveloped parcels proposed for onsite wastewater disposal within the County of Santa Cruz.