

- Improve quality of life;
- Support smart development in downtown areas; limit urban sprawl;
- Encourage downtown revitalizations with vibrant downtowns and walkable communities;
- Preserve tourism.

Financing

We must invest more money in water infrastructure and protection. We need to develop an innovative and sustainable mechanism to raise *local* revenue for Suffolk County. This mechanism should be similar in nature to the Community Preservation Fund. The funds raised could be used specifically for new sewer infrastructure as well as for replacement of aged on-site systems. Additional actions could include:

- Allow for a State property tax cap exemption for water infrastructure;
- Pursue Federal, State and Suffolk County grants as well as low interest loans;

The cost of *inaction* is much higher:

- Drinking water quality jeopardized;
- Loss of property values and tax base;
- Loss of tourism and attraction of new business;
- Greater vulnerability to storms and sea level rise.

Water Supply Rate Comparison



Water supply cost (\$ per 1,000 gallons) for Suffolk County, Nassau County, New York City, the national average and Westchester County. Long Island residents pay significantly less than the national average!

What We Can Do:

Government and environmental groups are:

- Advocating for and securing increased State and Federal water and wastewater funding;
- Developing plans to prioritize solutions and locations (NYSDEC's Long Island Nitrogen Action Plan [LINAP]);
- Improving wastewater treatment plants and testing advanced septic systems.

What Citizens Can Do:

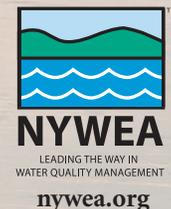
- Be informed!
- Support local funding for water protection efforts and secure support of elected leaders for program funding (Op-Eds, letters to officials, public forums). Safe drinking water and clean, treated wastewater cost less than the typical monthly cable bill;
- Decrease amounts of wastewater by using less water;
- Minimize use of the kitchen sink garbage disposal unit (insinkerator) since food waste is rich in nitrogen;
- Avoid putting household chemicals, paints, non-disposable wipes and pharmaceuticals down the drain;
- Participate in Suffolk County Reclaim Our Water and free advanced septic system pilot project (suffolkcountyny.gov/Departments/Planning/ReclaimOurWaterInitiativeUpdate.aspx)



NYWEA Long Island Chapter:
For more information visit, linywea.org
New York Water Environment Association
 525 Plum Street, Suite 102, Syracuse, NY 13204 • nywea.org

Water Infrastructure: Everyone Needs to Understand the Issues

Let's work together
to protect our water
and our quality of life!



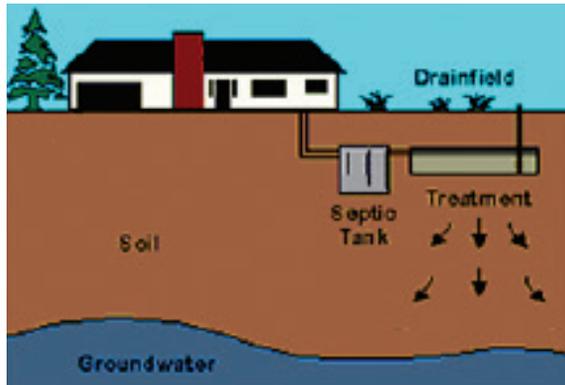
Long Island Water Pollution: A Threat to Our Quality of Life

Long Island is unique because we live directly on top of our only source of water for drinking, bathing and irrigation. As an island, we enjoy beautiful waterways and wetlands.

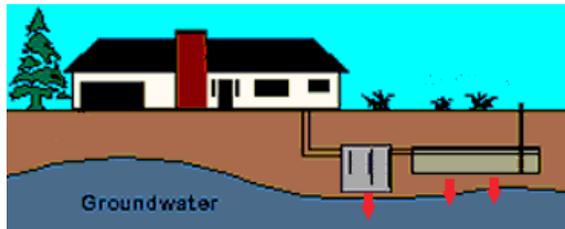
Here's What is Happening:

Areas without sewer systems rely on septic tanks or cesspools. Nitrogen is released from the wastewater that goes down our drains and toilets. As a result, excess nitrogen ends up in our drinking water, rivers, lakes and beautiful bays, causing many serious water quality problems.

FACT: Over 1 million people (74 percent) in Suffolk County have septic systems or cesspools.



Septic tanks and cesspools treat household wastewater only minimally, removals of pollutants such as nitrogen are less than 20% than that of a wastewater treatment facility.



In areas of Long Island with shallow soils and high groundwater levels and high population, fugitive nitrogen is released into the groundwater, and enters our streams, bays and wetlands. Sea level rise will also make the situation worse, as it leads to more nitrogen being released into the water.

Effects of Nitrogen and Other Pollutants

Nitrogen is Public Enemy #1: At high enough levels, nitrogen makes drinking water unsafe.

Excessive nitrogen in lakes, bays and oceans is food for small and large types of algae which then grow out of control. The algae:

- Use up the oxygen in water: fish, clams and other organisms die;
- Excess algae can shade out or compete with beneficial sea plants that protect us from storms;
- Can be directly toxic or harmful to fish and sometimes even humans (toxic algal blooms);
- Create unpleasant sights and odors on our beaches.

Current Funders of Wastewater Treatment

- Only the 26% of Suffolk's sewer residents contribute directly to the proper treatment of wastewater;
- Residents that live within defined sewer districts or privately owned and operated treatment facilities pay several hundred dollars per year to properly treat their wastewater to meet groundwater discharge standards;
- Homeowners in unsewered areas do not contribute in their tax base to the operation and maintenance of wastewater collection and treatment and disposal;
- The uneven distribution of costs to County residents for proper wastewater treatment for nitrogen reduction and protection of groundwater and surface waters that benefit all Suffolk residents needs to be addressed in a fair and responsible manner.



Brown tide at Moriches Bay caused by fugitive nitrogen

Other Pollutants

Household chemicals, fertilizers, pesticides, dry cleaning chemicals, and pharmaceuticals also pollute our waters – especially in unsewered areas where these contaminants can pass directly to groundwater.

Be aware of what you put down the drain!

Solutions: Expand sewer systems and advanced septic systems

- Connecting communities to sewer systems will address the fugitive nitrogen problem;
- For locations where this is not feasible, new advanced septic systems can significantly reduce nitrogen pollution.

Benefits of Action

- Protect public health, and meet the water demands of homes and businesses;
- Protect swimming, fishing, boating and other recreation;
- Protect ground and surface waters;
- Create and protect jobs;
- Preserve our tax base;