

Mandatory Septic Inspection Programs

Amendments have been made to the Ontario Building Code through Ontario Regulation 315/10 requiring the establishment of mandatory “on-site sewage system” (septic system) inspection programs.

These amendments support the Clean Water and Lake Simcoe Protection Acts.

This fact sheet has been developed to reduce the confusion around septic inspection requirements for the two programs and offer resources to support you in developing inspection programs.

Clean Water Act

The Clean Water Act, which passed in 2006, identifies septic systems as one of the 21 potential significant threats to drinking water. The Ontario Building Code was amended in response. It requires septic inspection programs to identify systems that aren’t being maintained properly and therefore pose a public health threat.

Lake Simcoe Protection Act

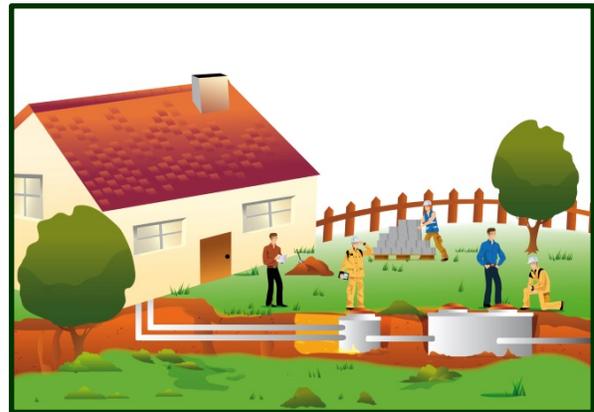
The Lake Simcoe Protection Act passed in 2009 and identifies septic systems located near shorelines and other water courses as threats to the water quality of Lake Simcoe. The Ontario Building Code was amended in response. It requires septic inspection programs for systems near watercourses in the Lake Simcoe watershed.

Why the Focus on Septic Systems?

Septic systems, when properly designed, constructed and maintained, effectively reduce or eliminate most human health or environmental threats posed by pollutants in household wastewater. However, they require regular maintenance or they can fail.

Failed systems pose a serious public health risk and can contaminate the surrounding ground and water, and enter drinking water systems far beyond the property boundaries. There is significant potential to cause serious illness and even death.

Property owners should be having their septic systems inspected every three to five years. This change to the Ontario Building Code gives public officials the responsibility for ensuring this is happening as well as the ability to take action if this is not the case.



Building Code amendments requiring septic inspection programs support the Clean Water and Lake Simcoe Protection Acts.

Property owners should have their septic systems inspected every three to five years.

The changes to the Ontario Building Code make sure this is happening and give public officials the ability to “take action for inaction”.

This table captures the highlights of the two septic inspection programs. This is a guidance document; it's not meant to be all-inclusive of every circumstance or requirement. Resources for further information are contained within.

	Clean Water Act	Lake Simcoe Protection Act
Are all septic systems subject to the inspection requirements?	No, only those septic systems located in vulnerable areas, where they have a vulnerability score of 10 - which identifies them as potential significant threats.	No, only those septic systems located within 100 metres of the Lake Simcoe shoreline or any of the ponds or watercourses that flow into Lake Simcoe.
How can I find out exactly which septic systems are impacted?	Each municipality has already been sent the mapping. Contact your local Conservation Authority or Source Protection Authority if you have trouble locating it.	Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing 777 Bay St. 2nd floor, Toronto, ON phone: 416.585.6666 fax: 416.585.7531 email: codeinfo@ontario.ca
What are the timelines?	All septic systems must be inspected within five years of when the Source Water Technical Assessment Reports were approved (January 19, 2012). That means you have until January 19, 2017 to complete your inspections.	The inspection program is being rolled out in two phases. Phase 1 is for septic systems located within 100 metres of the Lake Simcoe shoreline. Phase 2 is for locations as specified in Ontario Regulation 315/10 of the Ontario Building Code . Phase 1: For septic systems constructed before January 1, 2011, the inspection needs to occur by January 1, 2016. For septic systems constructed on or after January 1, 2011, the inspection needs to occur within five years of construction. Phase 2: For septic systems constructed before January 1, 2016, the inspection needs to occur by January 1, 2021. For septic systems constructed on or after January 1, 2016, the inspection needs to occur within 5 years of construction.

For more information, talk with your local Source Protection Authority contact:

Lakes Simcoe and Couchiching/Black River: Mike Wilson, 800-465-0437, ext. 281 or m.wilson@lsrca.on.ca

Nottawasaga Valley: Ryan Post, 705-424-1479, ext. 249 or rpost@nvca.on.ca

Severn Sound: Keith Sherman, 705-527-5166, ext. 206 or ksherman@midland.ca

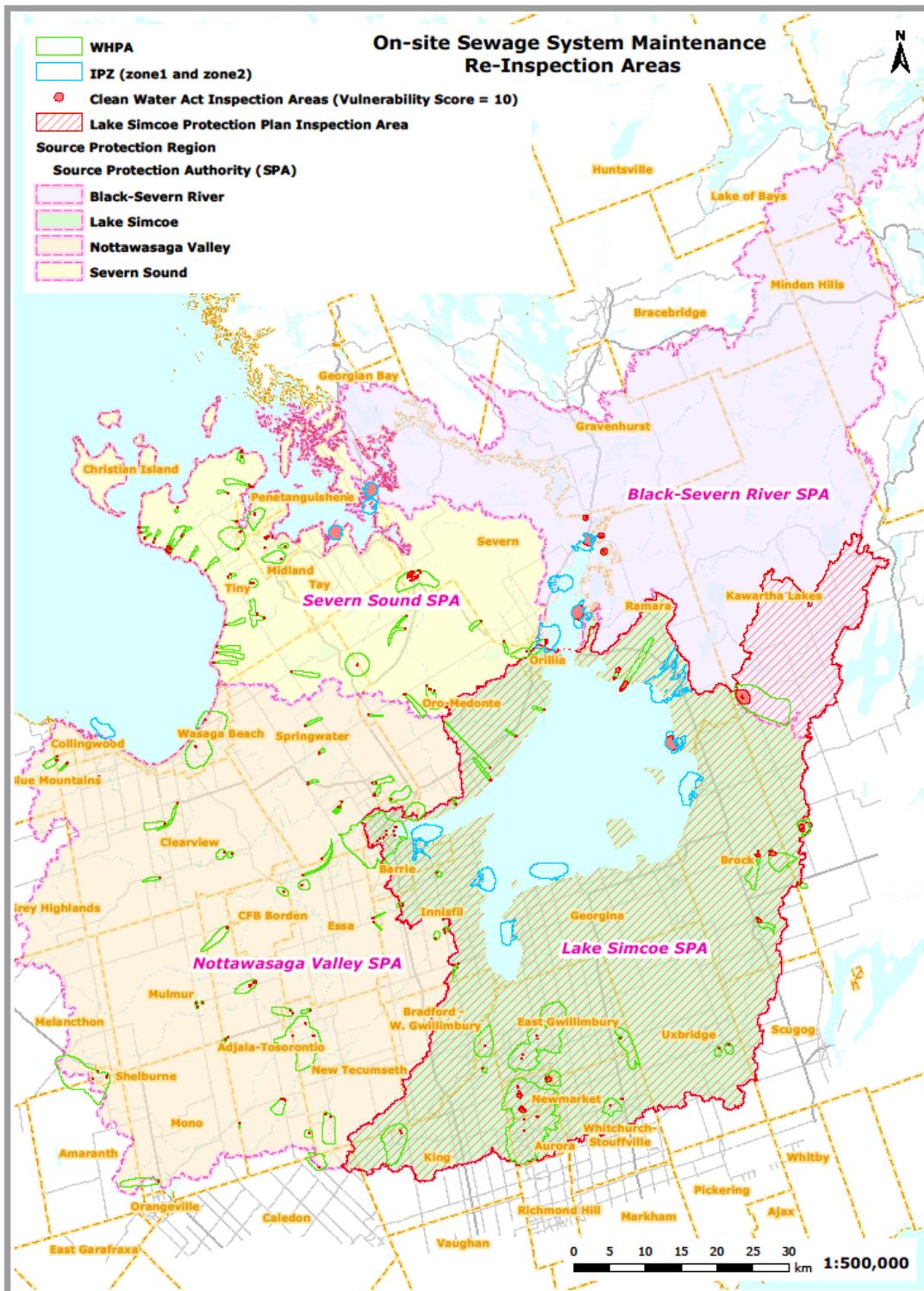
	Clean Water Act	Lake Simcoe Protection Act
What does a septic inspection entail?	The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing has set out a progressive approach to maintenance inspections for sewage systems. Initial inspections are designed to be non-intrusive tests. Where concerns are identified, additional tests may follow. Full details can be found in their fact sheet: http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/Asset9158.aspx .	
What information do I have to collect for compliance reporting?	Specific annual reporting requirements have not been determined, but at the very least, you should be tracking the total number of systems, the number of systems inspected, the number of pass/fail inspections, and the actions taken to remediate any failed systems.	The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing has created a document that provides guidance on the information that should be recorded during an inspection and kept on file: http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/Asset9158.aspx .
What happens after that?	All septic systems subject to inspections need to be re-inspected at least every five years after that.	
Who pays for the septic inspection?	It is up to each municipality how they wish to recoup their costs from the landowner.	
Is there anything else I should know?	The information contained within the Source Water Technical Assessment Reports is subject to change as new municipal wells are constructed and others taken off line. Please always work from the latest version of the Assessment Reports that can be found online at www.ourwatershed.ca .	The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing governs the Building Code Act and its Regulations and updates it regularly. Please ensure you are always working from the latest version.
What other resources are out there?	The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing has created a document to assist with developing your own inspection program: http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/Asset9158.aspx . We've also developed an Implementation Guide that contains case studies and templates you can also use. See: http://ourwatershed.ca/assets/downloads/implementation/guide/module8.pdf . You may also wish to consult with neighbouring municipalities.	

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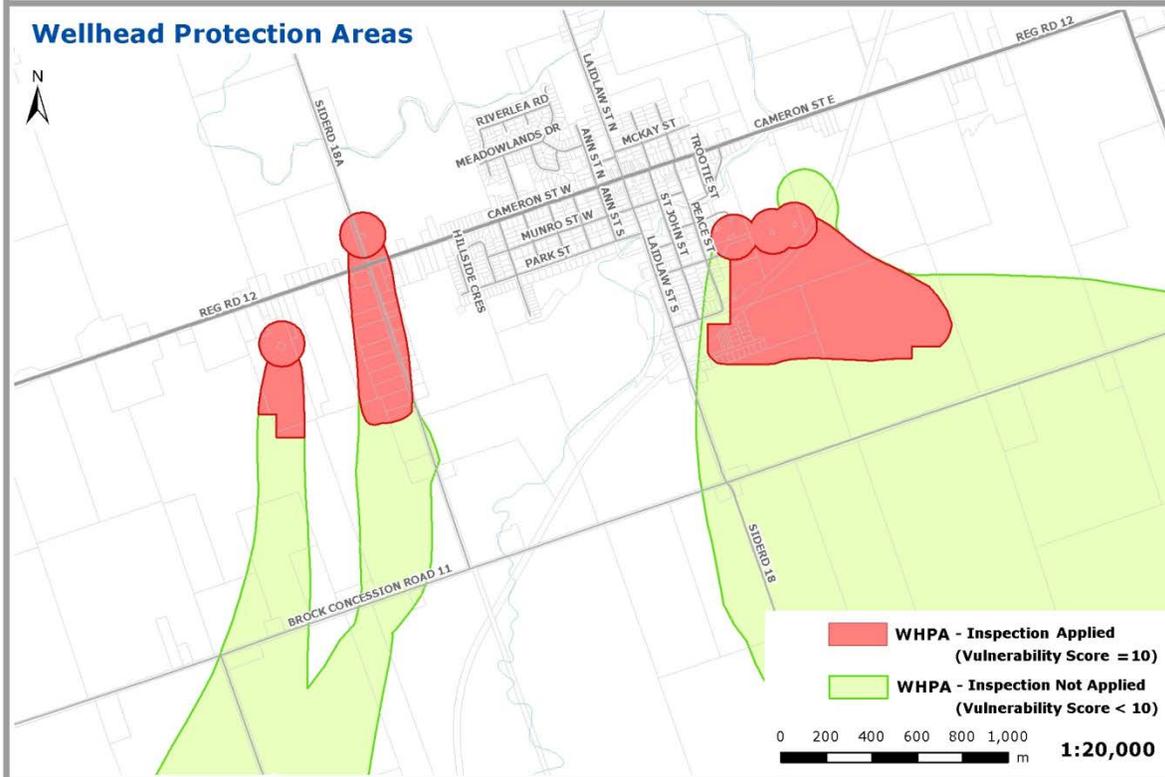
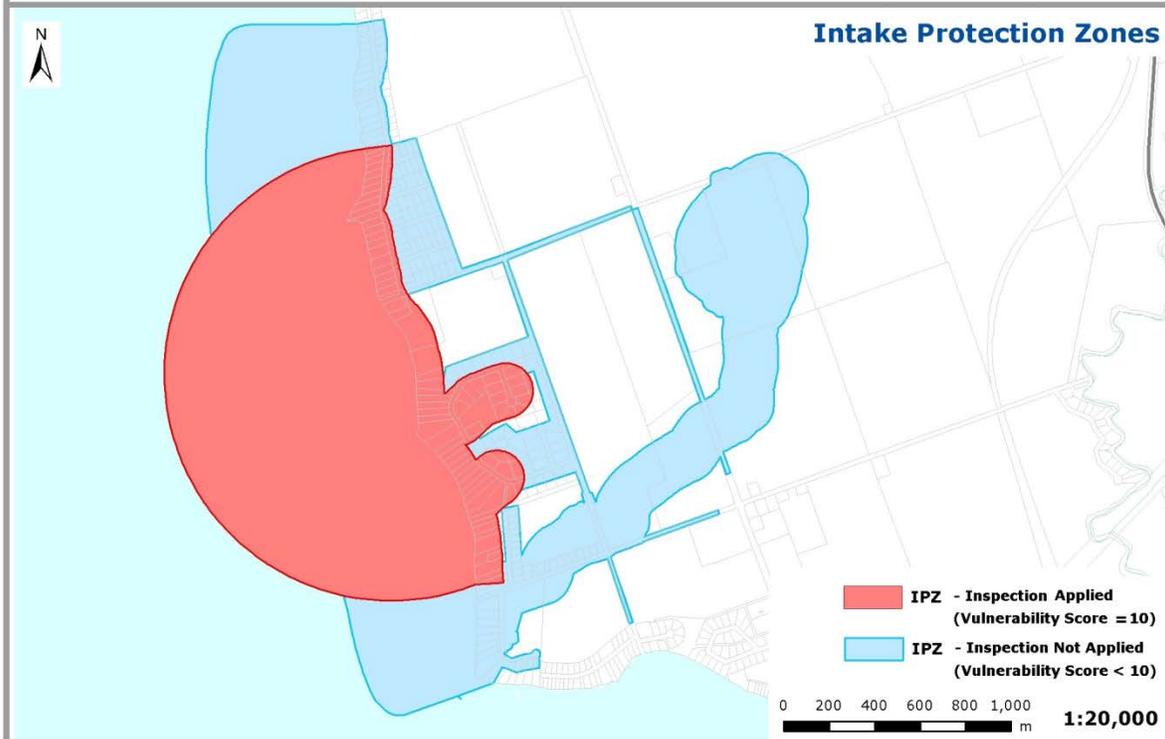
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On-site Sewage System Maintenance Re-Inspection Areas triggered under the Clean Water Act



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