

Sewage Facilities Planning and Permitting Program

DEP's Bureau of Clean Water manages the Sewage Facilities Program, which implements the Pennsylvania Sewage Facilities Act (known as "[Act 537](#)") and enforces 25 Pa. Code [Chapters 71](#), [72](#), and [73](#). Chapter 71 is titled "Administration of Sewage Facilities Planning Program", Chapter 72 is titled "Administration of Sewage Facilities Permitting Program" and Chapter 73 is titled "Standards for Onlot Sewage Treatment Facilities". The programs goal is to address existing sewage disposal needs and help prevent future problems through proper planning, permitting, design, operation, and maintenance of all types of sewage facilities.

Act 537 requires municipalities to develop and implement up-to-date official sewage facilities plans to protect public health and safety, prevent future sewage collection, treatment, and disposal problems, and protect the quality of the state's surface water and groundwater from sewage related issues. Act 537 provides the framework that allows DEP and municipalities to enforce the requirement for municipalities to develop and maintain a sewage management program (SMP). More specifically, in areas where citizens rely on onlot systems to provide sewage treatment and disposal municipalities SMPs ensure areas that cannot be served by public sewerage facilities are properly managing onlot treatment and disposal systems. Detailed information about Act 537 can be found [here](#). In addition, the [Pennsylvania Clean Streams Law of 1937 \(CSL\)](#), Article II contains provisions for prohibiting and regulating sewage discharges into waters of the Commonwealth.

The program provides oversight of the municipalities and local agencies that administer the program at the municipal level. DEP, local agencies, and Sewage Enforcement Officers are provided with many powers and duties that provide for protection of both surface and ground waters.

Act 537 also provides for new land development (NLD) to be served with sufficient long-term sewage disposal. NLD proposals may consider various options for collection, treatment, and disposal of treated sewage. Options of available treatment and disposal alternatives vary from municipally owned centralized collection, conveyance, treatment and disposal to individual and community onlot systems. In any case, proposals for NLD must provide assurance that long-term sewage disposal will be provided.

Once sufficient planning occurs, the design of the proposed facilities must be permitted. Individual and community on-lot systems treating 10,000 gallons per day or less are permitted by local agencies. All other on-lot and sewage treatment and disposal permits are issued by DEP via Water Quality Management Permits under the authority of the CSL. If a facility is proposing a discharge to the waters of the Commonwealth a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit is also required. The [Domestic Wastewater Facilities Manual](#) contains guidance on the permitting, design, and construction of domestic wastewater treatment facilities. These detailed instructions provide guidance that is designed to protect surface water, groundwater, and public health and safety. The [Small Flow Treatment Facilities Manual](#) provides guidance for

the design of sewage treatment facilities that collect and treat 2,000 gallons per day or less. Standards for individual and community onlot systems are provided in 25 Pa. Code Chapter 73 and the alternate onlot system listing. Land application of sewage is another method of treatment and disposal that is commonly available. These guidance documents provide for potential sewage pollution mitigation from all sources, big and small.