Septic Assistance Program

Many watersheds in Ottawa County have high levels of E. coli bacteria. This is, in part, due to ground and surface water contamination from failing septic systems throughout each watershed.

The Ottawa Conservation District (OCD) is offering cost-share funding as an incentive to Ottawa County property owners in Sand Creek, Crockery Creek, Bass River, Deer Creek, Pigeon River, and Rush Creek watersheds to repair or replace their failing septic systems outside of current Ottawa County regulations. This funding comes from the State of Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) through the 319 Nonpoint Source Program and is meant to address high levels of E. coli bacteria (partially from failing septic systems) in these watersheds.

Who is eligible: Property owners who reside within Ottawa County and within these watersheds with individual septic tank and drainfield systems may be eligible to receive reimbursement for septic system repairs or replacements. This is a first come first serve program and is not "competitive," but eligibility depends on a variety of factors and prioritization of resource concerns. The purpose of this funding is to incentivize landowners to inspect and repair failing septic systems prior to being required to by county regulations. Landowners must voluntarily reach out to OCD, the HD, or a contractor to address issues. This means we cannot fund septic system repairs and/or replacements occurring as a result of:

- Transfer of property/sale inspections,
- Violation or complaint inspections,
- New build properties with no failing system to replace.

Additionally, this funding source cannot be utilized to repair or replace systems that have a "point source" on the property which is directly discharging septic effluent into a nearby stream, ditch, or other form of water body. The Clean Water Act defines point sources as discrete conveyances such as pipes or man-made ditches that provide a direct discharge to a nearby surface water. Therefore, systems that include "cheater" or "overflow" pipes or man-made ditches are not eligible for funding. If the site potentially as a point source such as a pipe, there is a chance the system could potentially still be eligible depending on where the direct discharge feeds into, so feel free to still contact OCD about these properties.

How do you apply: Reach out to the OCD. Although this is an EGLE grant, all paperwork, contracts, verification, and payments go through the OCD. A watershed professional will help determine eligibility and walk you through the application process.

Program steps:

1. Call the OCD and ask for an application/set up a site visit (or download the application from www.ottawacd.org and email a completed copy to one of the program contacts below).
2. Fill out application and submit it to the OCD.
3. Have a septic inspection completed by an industry professional. This can be done by the County Health Department, or an independent contractor. This needs to be done to determine the condition of your system.
    a. To request an inspection from the Ottawa County Department of Health, call 616-393-5645.

    b. OCD cannot recommend specific septic contractors, but a google search will bring up several local options.
4. Apply for a County Health Department permit (if your system is failing).
    a. Visit https://www.miottawa.org/HealthSuite/ to apply for your permit.
5. The OCD will submit your application, site photos/information, an inspection report, and your Health Department permit to EGLE for final review and approval of funds.
6. After you are approved for the grant, you can schedule your septic repair/replacement.
    a. **No physical work** can be completed on the site prior to approval by EGLE. If septic repairs or replacements begin prior to official approval, then the site will become ineligible for cost share reimbursement through this program.

What can be funded:

- Replacement or repair of septic tanks
- Replacement or repair of drain field construction
- Replacement or repair of entire systems (tanks and drain field) including raised mound systems

Cost Share Rates and Reimbursement Timeline:

Applicants are ranked based on several factors including proximity to surface water, condition/age of your current system, and the risk it presents to the nearby ground and surface water. We can offer up to 50% cost share per system replacement, with a max cap of $10,000.

These payments are reimbursement based – the landowner will pay for the work to be done up front and then submit invoices/receipts to the OCD. You will then be reimbursed with grant funds after the current reporting period has come to an end (quarterly). Work completed, paid for, and verified during each quarter should generally expect to receive reimbursement checks about 2 months after the end of each quarter:

- Work completed in January - March: Reimbursement in May
- Work completed in April - June: Reimbursement in August
- Work completed in July - September: Reimbursement in November
- Work completed in October - December: Reimbursement in February

All cost share received through the District is taxable. All participants in cost share programs will be required to submit a W-9 prior to receiving cost-share funding. You will receive a Form-1099-MISC during the tax season associated with the year you received funding.

Program Contacts:

OCD Office Number: 616-842-5852 Ext. 5

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