

Appendix 10.2: WFHSSSR Project Frequently Asked Questions

West Falmouth Harbor Restoration Project

Frequently Asked Questions

April 13, 2015

Below, please find answers to what we anticipate will be some of your initial questions.

Am I eligible for the septic system tax credit if I upgrade my septic system?

You are eligible for the septic system tax credit if the Falmouth Board of Health deems your septic system “failed” and you replace it with a nitrogen reducing septic system. You can claim a tax credit of up to \$1,500/year for 4 years for a total credit of \$6,000. If your system does not fail and you still choose to voluntarily upgrade your system, you are not eligible for the tax credit.

What will my upgrade to a nitrogen reducing system do to the value of my home?

Your new septic system will have a positive impact on the value of your home. In addition to increasing the value of your home as a direct result of a home improvement, you will be reducing pollution to West Falmouth Harbor thereby improving the Harbor’s water quality making the Harbor and your home a more desirable place to live.

An investment in a new septic system also qualifies as an improvement that will increase the cost basis of your home. Increasing your cost basis will reduce the value of the capital gain tax obligation if you were to sell the home.

Will I be taxed on the \$10,000 subsidy?

Yes. The town will send you a W-9. The expenses incurred in the upgrade may be deductible expenses. We encourage you to consult a tax professional.

What is the average cost of a nitrogen reducing septic system?

There is a wide range of costs of nitrogen reducing septic systems depending on the specific site conditions of your property and on the technology you choose. Assuming that you have a septic tank that can be reused and a properly functioning leaching field, the least expensive septic system technology offered as part of this project may cost as low as \$13,000. The most expensive technology offered as part of this project may be \$45,000. If you have a cesspool and require a full upgrade of your system it will cost an additional \$15,000 to install a new tank and leaching field.

I am only in my home for part of the year, do these systems work on a seasonal basis?

Yes. The technologies available for this program were specifically chosen to work on a seasonal basis.

How many technologies are there to choose from?

A total of 24 nitrogen reducing technologies qualified for this project. 14 different nitrogen reducing septic systems and 10 different eco-toilet (composting or urine diverting toilets) technologies.

How will I choose among 24 different technologies?

The Buzzards Bay Coalition and the town of Falmouth will help you narrow down the choices. Not all 24 technologies may be suitable to your unique property or your preferences. We will help you make this decision after we visit your property and discuss with you what you want to see done.

How much nitrogen will a nitrogen reducing septic system remove?

Currently a cesspool or a Title 5 septic system does very little to treat the nitrogen coming from your wastewater. The technologies chosen for this program will reduce the nitrogen coming from your current system by at least 66%,

Have these nitrogen reducing technologies been used in the area before?

Most of the technologies chosen for this program have been tested at the Barnstable County Department of Health and Environment's Alternative Septic System Test Center. <http://www.barnstablecountyhealth.org/massachusetts-alternative-septic-system-test-center> In all cases, the technologies chosen for this program have been reviewed by industry professionals.

This program is challenging these technologies to reduce more nitrogen than is currently required by the state for an individual nitrogen reducing septic system. You will be participating in an exciting 'first-of-its-kind' project to see just how well these systems can perform.

How much does the annual sampling cost?

In order to make sure that these systems are removing nitrogen from the wastewater you will need to pay for periodic sampling. This grant program covers the cost for the first year of monthly sampling. You will be responsible for quarterly sampling after the first year. It will cost approximately \$300/year. If your system is performing well after the second year, you may request reduced sampling frequency from the Falmouth Board of Health.

How much does the annual operation and maintenance contract cost?

The average annual cost for operation and maintenance is \$850.

Will my electric bill go up?

It depends on the technology you choose, but most of the systems will require additional energy to run. Annual energy costs may be as low as \$75/year or as high as \$450/year depending on the technology.

What happens if the power goes out? Will I need a generator to prevent a sewer backup in my home?

If the power goes out, the system will function like a normal Title 5 septic system.

How do I sign up?

Call Korrin Petersen at the Buzzards Bay Coalition at (508) 999-6363 ext 206. petersen@savebuzzardsbay.org