

Cesspools – which are what reside in a majority of Milford and Matamoras – are not considered permitted treatment systems. Raw wastewater is discharged to a perforated pit. Most sludge (but maybe not all?) is maintained and untreated sewage then is discharged to the ground, generally near the surface. This is of particular concern in built-up areas because the concentration of raw sewer can be easily transferred through the groundwater table to contaminate wells, springs, and other waters. Well maintained on-lot disposal systems vary significantly from that of cesspools in that well designed and maintained septic systems use a combination of the water proof receptacle to contain solids and scum while discharging the liquid to a properly sized drain field that either uses a combination of sand (sand mound) or natural soils at a suitable depth to treat “clean” the liquid. Public sewer provides for a regulated secondary treatment system that is closely monitored to provide for treatment of raw sewage before being discharged at a regulated location. A quick Google search provides articles and papers that support this from WRE, EPA, and even the NY Times.

This is echo for why cesspools (in high density development) and pit (not vault) privies are classified as “Suspected Malfunctions” by definition of the PA Department of Environmental Protection Agency. Page 2 of the Sewage Disposal Need Identification guideline: <http://www.depgreenport.state.pa.us/elibrary/GetDocument?docId=6794&DocName=ACT%20537%20SEWAGE%20DISPOSAL%20NEEDS%20IDENTIFICATION.PDF%20> defines Suspected Malfunction. A cesspool, by definition, is a Suspected Malfunction without further investigation; for this very reason.

With this said, a majority of the system surveyed did not show signs of a “Confirmed Malfunction” and therefore the communities in THEIR plans are electing to have a public sewer alternative in the highest density areas, with the most sewer demand, in their communities. The remainder of the planning areas will remain with their on-lot systems (cesspools) in the plan as there was again, no signs of widespread confirmed malfunctions (thank goodness). A BIG part that is enabling the areas of the Boroughs to remain on on-lot systems is the fact that they are serviced from a public (regulated) water supply.

Attached are the Westfall NPDES (DEP) and Docket (DRBC) permit limits assigned to the WWTP by these two environmental steward agencies. Westfall’s discharge is below these limits as demonstrated in the 2019 Chapter 94 Report. [The 2020 report is in progress and is due to DEP annually on March 31 (a routine submission).]

Ground water travel the same direction as surface water, toward streams and rivers.

Cesspools contaminate our ground water, streams and oceans

