

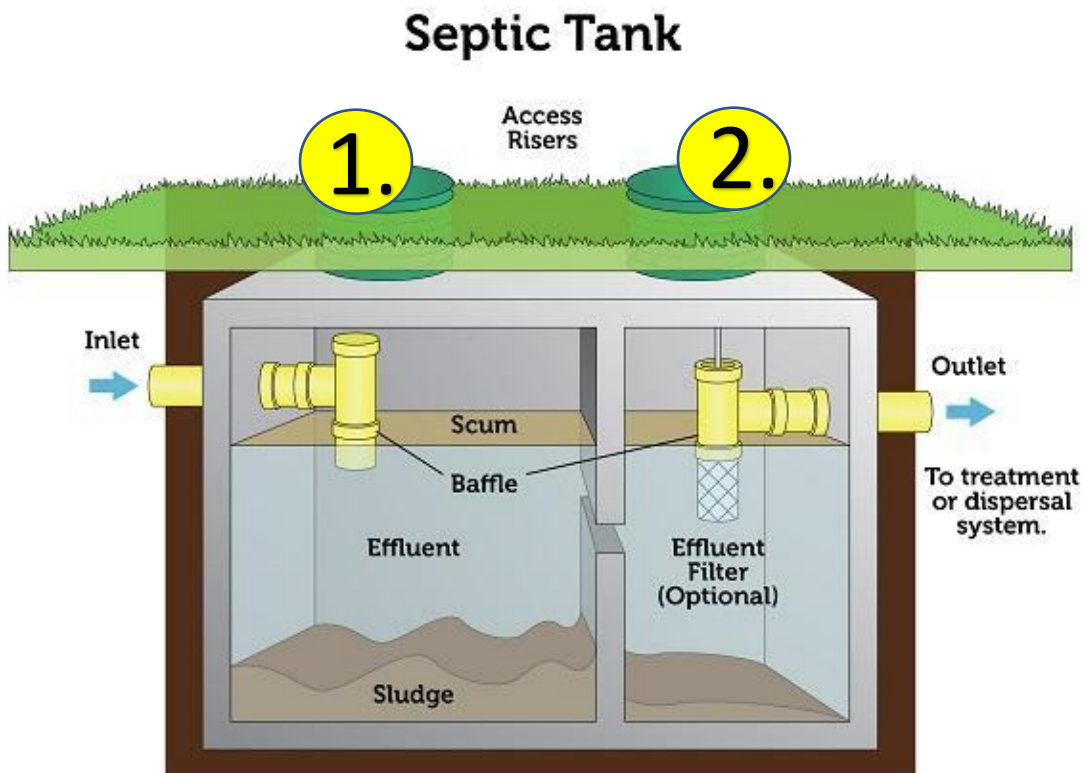
## How It Works: Septic Tanks

Tanks can be manufactured from precast concrete, polyethylene plastic, or fiberglass. The number of tanks needed, and gallon capacity depends on the number of bedrooms in the house.

### Septic Tanks

Septic tanks are the first step, or the primary treatment, to a home sewage treatment system (STS). The tanks' job is to allow the separation of the solids from the liquid.

1. The solids settle to the bottom of the first tank as a layer of sludge that the live bacteria will ingest. Fats and grease float to the top as a layer of scum. Bacteria breaks down the solids at the bottom of the tank.
2. The liquid, or sewage effluent, from the first tank transfers to the second tank (or second compartment), separating more solids, fats, and greases. Then it passes through the baffle and effluent filter to the secondary treatment of the STS. Some systems have a pump tank that uses a pump to discharge the effluent to the secondary treatment component.



Please note: The number of compartments in a septic tank vary by state and region.

## Anaerobic Bacteria

The septic tank uses anaerobic bacteria that do not need oxygen to survive. Instead, the anaerobic bacteria produce a gas called methane, which creates that sewage/septic odor. A buildup to methane can be dangerous to someone's health if inhaled.

## Homeowner Operation & Maintenance (O&M) Requirements

Tank(s) are simple to maintain. The most important maintenance of the tank(s) is to have it pumped by a registered septage hauler. It is recommended to have tank(s) pumped every 3 to 5 years. Ensure the tank lids are exposed so the hauler can have easy access into the tanks. Keep copies of your septic tank pumping records.

To find a registered septage hauler in Pickaway County, please view our contractor list on our website at [www.pickawaycountypublichealth.org](http://www.pickawaycountypublichealth.org).



To help maintain the quality of the sewage effluent and keep bacteria in the tank(s) healthy, use water in the household efficiently and NEVER flush anything down the toilet besides human waste or toilet paper.

### Remember the 3 Ps for flushing:

**Pee**

**Poop**

**(toilet) Paper**

Flushing anything other than the 3 Ps can require more frequent septage pumping and cause damage to the STS. *\*View the EPA SepticSmart document on our website to learn about items not to flush.*

Effluent filters located inside the T-baffle of the second tank (or second compartment) will need to be cleaned out at least every 6 months as maintenance for the septic tank. New soil absorption systems are equipped with an effluent filter in the second tank/ second compartment. The effluent filter prevents solids from passing through into the secondary treatment component.

Steps to Clean an Effluent Filter:

1. If the tank/compartments with the effluent filter is full of solids (visibly see a layer of solids at the top), make sure the tank/compartments is pumped beforehand. If the tank/compartments is full, a large amount of sewage effluent could flow into the secondary treatment component which is not designed to handle that large flow.
2. Wear gloves and safety glasses.
3. Open the second tank lid.
4. Pull the effluent filter out of the baffle.
5. Spray a hose on the effluent filter. Make sure to spray the water into the septic tank when cleaning the filter.
6. Make sure the solids are completely off the effluent filter. Place the effluent back into the baffle and put the lid back on the septic tank.

Click on the link below to watch a video of an effluent filter being cleaned.

[https://youtu.be/8HgpgYu\\_Ki4](https://youtu.be/8HgpgYu_Ki4)