

# Septic System Fact Sheet



Devils Lake Water Improvement District

## Introduction:

There are over 680 homes in the Devils Lake watershed that rely on a septic system to treat their wastewater.

Although, when used properly septic systems are a sufficient way to treat wastewater, a non functioning system can lead to pollution, eutrophication of the lake, and disease.

Historically, the Devils Lake Water Improvement District has identified septic systems as a known source of abatable nutrients. In 2008, the City of Lincoln City also turned its attention to septic systems. Since then, DLWID and the City of Lincoln City have been working in conjunction to require septic systems in the watershed be periodically inspected.

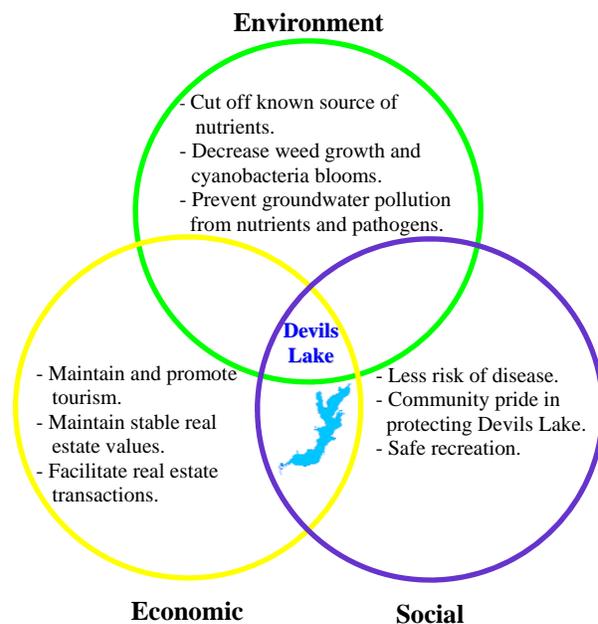
Although both the City and District recognize the potential added burden to property owners, the environmental, economic and social benefits to the community and watershed are too vast to warrant inaction.

## Environmental Impacts

Devils Lake suffers from excess nutrients. In years past this excess of nutrients has manifested as out of control weed growth and cyanobacteria blooms. While uncontrolled weed growth largely made the lake unusable for recreation, cyanobacteria potentially makes the lake dangerous for users and animals.

To protect the health and safety of users it is important to address the causes of this weed growth and blooms.

- Failing septic systems contribute dangerous pathogens to surface waters and groundwater.
- Septic systems are one source of nutrients that property owners have direct control over and a responsibility to maintain.
- Septic systems are a known source of nutrients. Septic systems contribute up to 25% of the total nitrogen load and 14% of the total phosphorus load.
- Cyanobacteria and weed growth are caused by eutrophication. Preventing nutrients from entering the lake is fundamental to stopping aquatic invasive species and cyanobacteria blooms.



## **Economic Impacts**

The property values around Devils Lake are directly tied to lake aesthetics, usability and recreational opportunities. Therefore, it is in the best interest of users, residents, business and government that the lake retains its economic and ecological value.

- An inspection program focused on nutrient abatement will bolster the District's Grass Carp application. Without Grass Carp, Devils Lake will revert to being heavily covered in weeds.
- Unchecked weed growth will decrease tourism and local property values.
- Identifying septic problems early can prevent expensive and costly fixes down the road, thereby saving the homeowner money.
- Real estate agents and buyers can be confident that the systems in the watershed are functioning.
- Environmentally minded tourists seek out communities doing the right thing, which promotes sustainable green tourism.

## **Social Impacts**

People love to recreate, live, and buy homes near Devils Lake because they recognize Devils Lake as a great resource. What better way to support Devils Lake then to assure it will be healthy for us and future generations.

- Provides confidence the lake is clear of disease and pathogens due to septic systems.
- Community pride in being responsible stewards of a valuable resource.

- Increased recreation and tourism.
- Increase community events held at Devils Lake.
- A safer and healthier lake.

Finally, this inspection ordinance is an important facet of the Devils Lake Plan, which strategizes ways to improve Devils Lake keeping it a viable recreational, ecological and economic resource for Lincoln City.

In addition to assuring septic systems are functioning, the Devils Lake Plan also addresses many other watershed issues including:

- Increasing shoreline vegetation
- Invasive species prevention
- Increase sewer access.
- Additional Chinese Grass Carp
- Stormwater management
- Low Impact Development.

The District is already working on a number of these projects and will continue to do so. However, since Devils Lake is a community resource, it requires a community to be successful. Many of these projects the District can spearhead but for them to be successful it requires everyone to play a role.