

***NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION  
BUREAU OF WATER SUPPLY***

**Septic System Rehabilitation Reimbursement Program  
for West Branch and Boyd Corners Reservoir Basins**

December 2013

*Prepared in accordance with Section 4.9 of the Draft Mid-Term Revisions to the  
2007 Filtration Avoidance Determination (August 2013)*



Prepared by: DEP, Bureau of Water Supply

## **Summary**

The New York City Department of Environmental Protection (“DEP”) has established programs for the West Branch and Boyd Corners Reservoir Watersheds, unfiltered reservoirs within New York City’s Catskill/Delaware water supply system, that provide a variety of water quality protection measures. In accordance with *Section 4.9 of the Draft Mid-Term Revisions to the 2007 Filtration Avoidance Determination* (August 2013), DEP is expanding these programs to include a septic repair program with the intent to reduce potential water quality impacts from failing septic systems.

## **West Branch and Boyd Corners Basin Description**

The West Branch and Boyd Corners Reservoir Watersheds have approximately 50% of the land area directly owned by DEP or otherwise protected through easements or ownership by New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (“NYSDEC”). The majority of parcels used for residential land use have wastewater treated via on-site subsurface disposal system. West Branch and Boyd Corners Reservoir Watersheds have approximately 2,800 residential septic systems. Additionally, there are residential areas that have their wastewater needs met via centralized collection and treatment systems<sup>1</sup>.

## **West Branch and Boyd Corners System Rehabilitation Reimbursement Program**

The West Branch and Boyd Corners Septic System Rehabilitation Reimbursement Program (“Program”) will be a voluntary program for homeowners with failing septic systems. Since the cost of a septic repair may serve as a deterrent to the property owner to take appropriate remedial action, DEP will provide funding to reimburse a portion of the costs to rehabilitate eligible failing septic systems or connect those systems to an existing sewage collection system. It is anticipated that a voluntary program that provides a portion of the rehabilitation cost through reimbursement will motivate property owners to repair failing septic systems.

DEP has contract with New York State Environmental Facilities Corporation (“EFC”) for the existing septic system reimbursement program that has been successfully implemented in the Kensico basin. DEP will amend this contract to expand the geographic scope to include West Branch and Boyd Corners Reservoir Watersheds. DEP will direct EFC to notify residents of the availability of the Program through a mailing to residential properties within the priority areas. The mailing will include information about the Program as well as contact information if they have questions about the Program.

Residential homeowners who have a failing septic system would be able to contact EFC to receive Program participation materials. EFC would also provide a list of licensed contractors that might be available to perform the work needed to repair the septic system. Residents would be able to secure the contractor of their choice and be able to work with their contractor to develop a solution that satisfies for the homeowner as well as the regulatory agencies.

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<sup>1</sup> Lake Gleneida is located entirely within existing sewer districts. As such, this area is not included in the septic repair program.

Once the Program is established, participating homeowners who repair their septic systems would be able to submit the documentation to EFC and receive up to 50% cost share for the cost of the repair. The Program rules will include a provision whereby residents with a demonstrated financial hardship may have the homeowner’s share of the project cost reduced to 25% of the total repair cost.

The Program will likely gain some participation via the existing septic programs that have been put in place by the local municipalities. As of May 2011, the municipalities located in the Program area were required to implement and enforce a program for the inspection, maintenance, and, where necessary, the rehabilitation of system systems as part of their compliance with the SPDES General Permit for Stormwater Discharges from Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems (“MS4 Permit”)<sup>2</sup>. As such, repairs of failing septic systems are occurring in the Program area as required by the provisions of the MS4 Permit.

**Phased Prioritization**

The Program will be implemented on a prioritized basis based on the potential risk that a failing septic system might have on terminal reservoir water quality. The initial phase of the Program will include residential properties located within 50 feet of a watercourse. DEP and EFC will complete the mailing to the eligible residents in the first phase by June 30, 2015. This initial phase covers more than a third of all the eligible septic systems located within West Branch and Boyd Corners Watersheds. As able within allocated funding, DEP will expand the Program to properties further from a watercourse in 50-foot increments depending on the level of activity of the Program and anticipated water quality concern. Not all septic systems in West Branch and Boyd Corners Watersheds may be covered under the Program due to minimal risk to water quality in a terminal reservoir. The estimated number of eligible residential properties in the initial priority areas is found in Table 1.

Table 1. Estimate of Residential Septic Systems in West Branch and Boyd Corners Watersheds

<u>Distance from Watercourse (ft)</u>	<u>West Branch</u>	<u>Boyd Corners</u>
0-50	427	413
50-100	119	105
100-150	80	83
150-200	107	85

The Draft Mid-Term Revisions to the 2007 FAD call for the Program to commence implementation by June 30, 2015, and to be funded at a level sufficient to reimburse 100 homeowners for a portion of the repair or replacement of their septic system in the remaining term of the 2007 FAD. Since the remaining term of the 2007 FAD will be approximately 2 years from the Program commencement date of June 30, 2015, DEP will be providing sufficient funding to reimburse approximately 50 homeowners per year.

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<sup>2</sup> Part IX.3.b of the Permit No. GP-0-10-002 requires that all municipalities “Develop, implement and enforce a program that ensures that on-site sanitary systems...are inspected at a minimum frequency of once every five years and, where necessary, maintained or rehabilitated.”

Based on other septic repair programs, DEP estimates a septic failure rate would be approximately 10%. Since the first phase of the Program has approximately 840 residential properties, this phase may result in approximately 84 septic failures that could participate in the Program. If participation in the Program does not result in approximately 50 participants during the first year, DEP will determine whether to open participation to the second phase of eligibility (i.e., residents within 50-100 feet of a watercourse). Eligibility will remain open during the remaining term of the 2007 FAD until the program target of 100 participants has been achieved.