



Howard County

Internal Memorandum

SUBJECT: *Septic Reimbursement Program*

TO: Lonnie R. Robbins
Chief Administrative Officer

FROM: James A. Caldwell, Administrator
Office of Community Sustainability

DATE: December 22, 2016

As you are aware, Howard County must treat 20% of its unmanaged impervious surfaces by 2019, under its MS₄ permit. The Maryland Department of Environment (MDE) accepts septic tank pumping as a method to meet this permit. By issuing residents a \$100 reimbursement for pumping their tanks regularly, about 40% of this service's cost in our County, we can receive credit for an acre of impervious surface treatment for only \$3,000. This is the most affordable known impervious management strategy. If all septic users in the County regularly pumped their tanks, Howard County could receive 570 acres of impervious surface credit, or about 29% of our permit goal.

Pumping a septic system every 3-5 years can help prevent septic failure. Not only is septic failure costly to users, it also can cause surface and groundwater contamination. Although many septic users are aware that tanks should be pumped at some interval, they sometimes do not know the frequency that is appropriate or other household needs may take priority over pumping at the recommended frequency. A septic maintenance reimbursement program could incentivize this very important behavior.

In the first year of the septic maintenance reimbursement program, we hope to reach 1,000 septic users and expend \$100,000 from the Watershed Protection Fund. We have coordinated with the necessary stakeholders to help ensure this program's success: the Howard County Health Department, the Little Patuxent Wastewater Treatment Plant, the Department of Public Works and the University of Maryland Sea Grant Extension, who will offer free septic education classes.

The Office of Community Sustainability aims to create new programs that are feasible for the public, beneficial to the environment, and cost-effective for the County. The proposed septic maintenance reimbursement program very clearly meets all of the above criteria. We hope that you approve spending for this incentive-aligned program.