

Glossary of Terms

- **Aerobic Bacteria** - are bacteria that thrive and grow only in the presence of oxygen in their environment.
- **Aerobic Treatment Unit (ATU)** – are OSSFs that use oxygen and consists of several processes that function together to provide a high-quality effluent.
- **Backflow** - occurs when water or wastewater flows backward from a drainfield into a septic tank or from a septic tank into the wastewater source or household.
- **Bacteria** – are small, disease-causing, single-celled microorganisms that are common in untreated dirt, sewage and surface water.
- **Conventional Septic System** – is a decentralized wastewater treatment system consisting of a septic tank and a trench or bed subsurface wastewater infiltration system. The septic tank digests organic matter and separates floatable matter and solids from the wastewater.
- **Drainfield** - also called leach fields or absorption fields that remove and manage the wastewater pumped from the septic tank. They feature perforated pipes buried underground designed to slowly release the effluent into the soil.
- **E-coli** – is a common bacteria commonly found in the lower intestine of warm-blooded organisms, including humans. It is a primary indicator of bacterial pollution
- **Effluent** - is wastewater from sewers or industrial outfalls that flows directly into water ways and surface waters.
- **Geotextile fabric** - permeable material designed to enhance soil characteristics, in the case of OSSFs, they allow water to pass through while retaining soil particles, preventing clogging.

Glossary of Terms

- **Impaired water** – a body of water that does not meet applicable water quality standards or fully support applicable beneficial uses.
- **Impermeable Soil** – are soils are compact, consolidated soil particles that don't allow water to penetrate, forcing it to run off.
- **Onsite Wastewater Treatment System (OWTS)** - are used to treat wastewater from a home or business and return treated wastewater back into the receiving environment.
- **On-Site Sewage Facility (OSSF)** – in Texas OWTS are often referred to as OSSFs. They are used to treat wastewater from a home or business and return treated wastewater back into the receiving environment.
- **Scum** - is composed of materials that float on water such as grease, oil, and fats. It forms a layer on top of the water surface an OSSF tank.
- **Sludge** - is the "sinkable" solid portion of sewage waste that settle to the bottom of the OSSF tank and form a layer.
- **Total Maximum Daily Load** - a plan for restoring impaired waters that identifies the maximum amount of a pollutant that a body of water can receive while still meeting water quality standards. Another way to look at it as a budget of how much pollution can enter the water and still meet the state standard for water quality.