

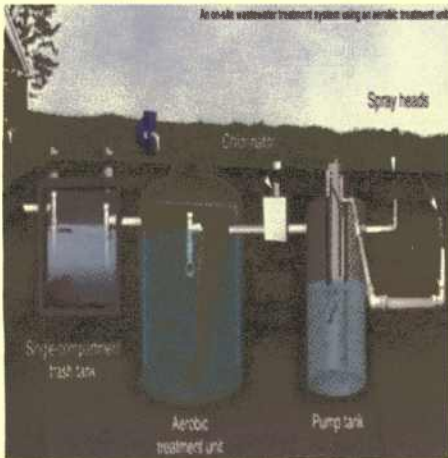


# SJRA's On-Site Sewage Facility Program

By: Randy Acreman, OSSF Program Administrator

The San Jacinto River Authority is the designated agent of the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) to implement and enforce TCEQ's On-Site Sewage Facility Rules and Regulations for the area immediately surrounding Lake Conroe. SJRA's area of jurisdiction is 2,075 feet in all directions horizontally from the lake shoreline defined as elevation 201 feet MSL. Onsite (or on-site) sewage facilities (OSSFs) are wastewater systems designed to treat and dispose of effluent on the same property that produces the wastewater. Most homeowners refer to these as septic systems. If a facility produces more than 5,000 gallons per day it must be connected to a centralized wastewater treatment facility and cannot use OSSF treatment.

In order to implement these rules, SJRA implements a comprehensive program involving initial construction permitting, new construction inspections, routine inspections of



operations, and comprehensive enforcement procedures. SJRA's Lake Conroe Division administers the program with in-house staff, while partnering with other regulatory and law enforcement agencies concerning enforcement measures.

Lake Conroe has historically enjoyed very good water quality, and SJRA has developed a watershed management strategy to protect that good quality and address future potential water quality problems that may result from urban growth around the reservoir. The OSSF program is a key component included in this strategy.

Currently there are approximately 2,300

OSSFs within SJRA's jurisdiction. About 1,700 of those systems are aerobic treatment units (ATU's), which are required where soil conditions are not suitable for subsurface infiltration. ATU's provide secondary treatment of the wastewater and typically use spray irrigation to dispose of the treated wastewater. These systems have treatment components that must be maintained to function properly and therefore are required to have ongoing maintenance and inspection performed by a TCEQ-licensed maintenance provider or a homeowner that has met SJRA's minimum training requirements as explained below.

The inspection and maintenance of ATUs serving single family dwellings can be performed by a homeowner if any one of the following criteria is met:

- > The property owner has satisfactorily completed the 8 hour course entitled Troubleshooting Aerobic Treatment Units offered by Environmental Training Systems (<http://www.environmentaltrainingsystems.com>);



- > The property owner is a maintenance provider licensed by the TCEQ;

- > The property owner holds a valid Class D or higher wastewater treatment license;

- > The property owner has satisfactorily completed a TCEQ-approved Basic Maintenance Provider Course; or

- > The property owner has satisfactorily completed the OSSF – Aerobic/Surface Application System Operation and Maintenance Course entitled – General Guidance for Monitoring Aerobic Treatment Units, Disinfection Units, and Spray Fields in Texas (B6235) offered by the AgriLife Extension, Texas A&M System.

SJRA conducts routine inspections of ATUs in order to insure the systems are func-



tioning properly and that the proper maintenance is being performed. Our rules for ATUs have recently been modified to require submittal to SJRA of the homeowner's annual contract with a licensed maintenance provider or to provide proof of meeting the requirements for homeowner-provided maintenance.

SJRA makes every effort to encourage voluntary compliance with the state's rules and regulations. However, failure to repair a malfunctioning system or meet the state's maintenance requirements for an ATU can lead to legal enforcement action. Citations for violations to these rules are now being issued by law enforcement officers from the Precinct 1 Constable's office. If you own an OSSF near Lake Conroe, please make sure you are in compliance with the Lake Conroe Rules and Regulations related to these facilities. For a copy of the rules, go to the Lake



Conroe Division website at [www.sjra.net/lakeconroe/](http://www.sjra.net/lakeconroe/). ♦