

**STATE OF GEORGIA  
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES  
ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION DIVISION (EPD)**

**FACT SHEET - TIER 1 OPERATION**

**GENERAL LAND APPLICATION SYSTEM PERMIT FOR LAND DISPOSAL OF  
DOMESTIC SEPTAGE  
GENERAL PERMIT NO. GAG620000**

The Georgia Water Quality Control Act requires the EPD to regulate and permit any land disposal site that receives septic tank waste (domestic septage) under a permit issued by the Director of EPD. In February of 2014, the Department of Natural Resources Board adopted a rule change to amend Georgia's Rules and Regulations for Water Quality Control Chapter, 391-3-6-.23; "Land Disposal of Septage". The rule change establishes a two-tiered permitting system that distinguishes between single pumper-single site operations and larger facilities that receive waste from more than one pumper. Additionally, the Rule amendments provide clarification through the modification of language, new or modified requirements, the amendment of existing definitions, and includes the addition of new definitions.

EPD is proposing a Tier 1 Operation General Permit (Permit No. GAG620000). A Tier 1 operation is defined in the Rules as "a land disposal site that receives and land applies septic tank waste from a single permitted septic tank pumping and hauling business." The proposed permit will allow coverage of that activity. The disposal of septage must take place under controlled conditions, by either injection or incorporation into the soil, within the State of Georgia. This general permit does not authorize coverage to land application systems associated with biosolids and grease trap waste, covered by an individual land application system permit, or associated with or containing industrial, commercial, solid, hazardous, or non-biodegradable wastes.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

The Department of Public Health (DPH) was previously charged with administering domestic septage land disposal permits. The General Assembly transferred the regulation and permitting authority for land disposal sites receiving septage from the DPH to EPD on July 1, 2012. In preparation for this, EPD issued a General Land Application Permit on September 30, 2011. Concerns from the septage disposal industry and the DPH regarding the economic feasibility of transitioning the smaller DPH regulated land disposal sites to EPD permits by the original 2012 deadline caused the General Assembly to subsequently extend the date for EPD's assumption of regulatory responsibility over single pumping and hauling businesses to July 1, 2014. This proposed Tier 1 Operation General Permit is a modification of the previous general permit and reflects the recent rule amendment to establish a two-tiered permitting system. This permit addresses Tier 1 - single pumper-single site operations. Tier 2 operations will be addressed separately.

Domestic Septage as defined in the Georgia Rules and Regulations for Water Quality Control Chapter 391-3-6-.23 is the liquid or solid material removed from a septic tank, cesspool, portable toilet, type III marine sanitation device, or a similar system that receives only domestic sewage. Domestic Septage does not include liquid or solid material removed from a septic tank or similar treatment works that receives either commercial wastewater or industrial wastewater. Domestic Septage does not include grease removed from a grease trap.

Septage, which has been properly pretreated and stabilized, may be beneficially used, as these are nutrient-rich organic materials that will provide nitrogen and phosphorus as well as trace amounts of micronutrients. However, septage may contain pathogens or other contaminants that could potentially harm plants, animals, or humans if applied at too great a rate, or if managed improperly. The proposed Tier 1 Operation General Permit No. GAG620000 will allow for the utilization of the nutrients and other beneficial properties of septage while ensuring that the health and welfare of the general public is protected.

The proposed Tier 1 Operation General Permit contains requirements for land application of domestic septage at agronomic rates. Septage application to land with a low potential for public exposure is allowed based on nutrient uptake of the crop, unless the application is limited by other parameters. The type and the condition of the soil and cover crop, topography, and other properties of the septage will determine the application rate. The septage must meet pollutant concentration limits, pathogen reduction, and vector attraction reduction requirements located in 40 CFR Part 503 and Georgia Water Quality Control Rules Chapter 391-3-6-.23. In addition, the septage must be screened and stabilized prior to land application.

#### **COVERAGE:**

The proposed Tier 1 Operation General Permit shall provide coverage for any land disposal site that receives septage and to any person who land applies septic tank waste for subsurface injection or incorporation into the soil from a single permitted septic tank pumping and hauling business.

Authorization to operate under a general permit shall be effective upon receipt of notification of inclusion from the Division, except for any site that as of June 30, 2007, operated under a valid permit issued on or before such date by the Department of Public Health under Code Section 31-2-8. For such sites, initial coverage shall be effective upon submission of a Notice of Intent to the Division.

#### **TERMINATING COVERAGE:**

EPD may deny coverage under this permit based on incomplete or incorrect Notice of Intent submittal. The Director may at any time revoke coverage under this permit in accordance with the State Rules, Section 391-3-6-.15(11).

## **NOTICE OF TERMINATION (NOT)**

A permittee that has ceased the land application of septage for which permit coverage was obtained must submit a NOT to EPD within thirty (30) days after the activity has ceased.

## **REQUIRED INFORMATION:**

Systems applying or proposing to land apply domestic septage must submit the following to EPD:

- A signed and completed Notice of Intent (NOI) by a duly authorized representative of the application system for authorized coverage under General Permit GAG620000, Land Disposal of Domestic Septage.
- A septage management plan (SMP) that includes an identified section specifying details for the clean-up and closure of the operation for EPD's approval. The proposed permit contains provisions for owners of an existing septage land application system with a valid permit issued by the Department of Public Health under O.C.G.A. § 31-2-13 prior to June 30, 2007 to submit an SMP in accordance with a compliance schedule. All other owners seeking coverage under this permit must have a SMP approved by EPD prior to receiving coverage to operate under this permit.

## **NOTICE OF INTENT (NOI) REQUIREMENTS:**

1. Owners of an Existing Septage Land Application System
  - a. Owners wishing to continue operation after this date must obtain a permit issued by the Division by June 30, 2014. To obtain coverage under this Tier 1 operation permit, owners of existing systems shall submit a Notice of Intent (NOI). Such Notice of Intent shall be on forms as may be prescribed and furnished by the Division.
  - b. Coverage under this general permit shall be effective upon submittal of a complete NOI.
2. Owners of a New Septage Land Application System
  - a. Owners of a new system who intend to obtain coverage under this Tier 1 operation permit for the land application of domestic septage shall submit a Notice of Intent (NOI) along with a Septage Management Plan and other required documents for the system to the Division for approval.
  - b. Coverage under this general permit shall be effective upon receipt of Notice of Inclusion by the Division.
3. An owner of a septage land application system that is operating at the time of the effective date of this permit is not precluded from submitting an NOI in accordance with the requirements of this permit after the deadlines provided in this section. In any such instance, the Division may bring an enforcement action for failure to submit the NOI or for any unauthorized disposal of septage or sewage wastes to

the land application system that have occurred after the deadlines provided in this section.

4. Establishment of an unauthorized septage land application system after the effective date of this permit will be considered a violation of this permit, the Rules and Regulations for Water Quality Control, and the Water Quality Control Act; unless an NOI has been submitted to the Division and the Division allows coverage of the system under this general permit; or unless the system is covered under an individual permit.
5. The permittee shall not land apply septage after the expiration date. In order to receive permit renewal consideration to operate beyond the expiration date, the permittee shall submit such information, NOI forms, and fees as are required by the EPD no later than 180 days prior to the expiration date of the permit.

#### **NOI FOR CHANGE OF OWNERSHIP:**

When ownership of a septage land application system which is covered by this general permit changes, the new owner must submit a new NOI to EPD in accordance with the requirements of this permit at least thirty (30) days prior to the change of ownership. Failure to submit the new NOI may be considered a violation of this permit. EPD may decline to allow continued coverage under this general permit and may require coverage by another permit.

#### **PUBLIC NOTICE:**

For owners of a new system, upon receipt of the required information, a site inspection to determine the general acceptability of the proposed site may be conducted by EPD. Any owner of a land application system submitting an NOI for a new system, or an addition to an existing system will be required to complete a 30 day public notice in a local newspaper in the area of the proposed activity. Owners of an existing system permitted by the Department of Public Health, upon submitting an NOI, will not be required to complete a 30 day public notice. This permit will be valid for a period of five years.

#### **REPORTING AND RECORDS:**

Required analytical results obtained by the permittee shall be summarized on an Operational Monitoring Report (OMR) form. The OMR forms shall be completed quarterly and the summarized monitoring results shall be compiled in an annual report, signed in accordance with the Georgia Rules and Regulations for Water Quality Control, Chapter 391-3-6-.11(5)(e), and shall be maintained on file at the facility, unless otherwise notified in writing by EPD. EPD may require the reporting of additional monitoring results by written notification.