

SUFFOLK IS EYEING HIGH-TECH SEPTIC SYSTEMS FOR NEW CONSTRUCTION

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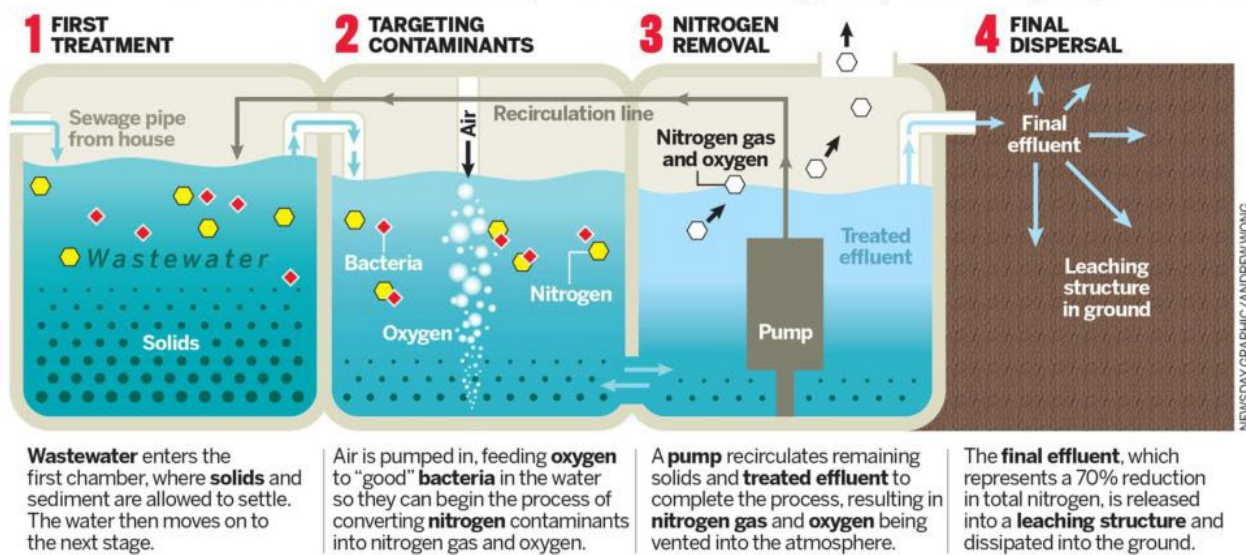
Suffolk County homeowners who build or renovate their residences would have to install high-tech septic systems that can cost double the amount of a traditional system, according to a proposed water quality initiative by County Executive Steve Bellone.

Bellone's proposed sanitary code amendment, on which county legislators will vote Wednesday, is the first step in a \$4 billion subwatersheds wastewater plan to phase out aging septic systems and cesspools over 50 years. The proposal aims to reduce nitrogen pollution that officials have blamed in part for fish kills, algal blooms and beach closures.

But critics have said that concerns about nitrogen pollution are overstated and that county officials have yet to prove the systems, which cost about \$20,000 to install plus yearly \$300 maintenance costs, are effective at improving water quality.

"You're going to tell me I have to drop \$20,000 into the ground and then have to pay for it every year? If you showed me this was something really having an impact and is necessary, I'll come up with the money," said Royal Reynolds, a former county engineer who is part of a coalition of engineers and scientists who have questioned the subwatershed plan.

ADVANCED SEPTIC SYSTEM Many models exist. Here's how they generally work in reducing nitrogen in wastewater.



A diagram showing how advanced septic systems work. Source: Suffolk County Dept. of Health Services; Illustration by Andrew Wong

Deputy County Executive Peter Scully, the county water quality czar, said that Suffolk has a stringent certification process for the systems and that computer models show they would help improve water quality in 10 years.

"You don't want to continue to put old technology in the ground," Scully said.