Louisiana Department of Health & Hospitals
Office of Public Health
Center for Environmental Health Services
Onsite Wastewater Program

Information Packet for Applicants

(For Septic Tanks with Secondary Treatment)

FOREWORD

In order to expedite the issuance of a permit to have an individual wastewater treatment plant installed, it is necessary for you to read and understand the information contained within this application packet and to submit all of the requested information complete with signatures where indicated.

The information contained in this packet is a step by step guide to assist you through the process of acquiring a permit to have an individual sewage system installed all the way through to the finalization of your permit by representatives of the Office of Public Health. If you have any questions regarding the information contained in this packet please contact your local Environmental/Sanitarian Services Office at:
https://ldh.la.gov/page/3745

I. *Terms and Definitions*

AEROBIC TREATMENT UNIT – a sewage treatment system that utilizes bacteria which require oxygen to break down the waste materials; bacterial treatment is obtained using a mechanical means to introduce the needed oxygen into the system.

EFFLUENT - the typically treated liquid that drains from an onsite wastewater treatment system into a designated drainage right of way, parish maintained servitude for discharge or natural drainage, or water body.

FIELD BED/LINES or ABSORPTION TRENCHES – a secondary treatment method for septic tank effluent consisting of a system of level bottomed trenches with gravel, or gravelless piping, designed to absorb and further treat partially treated effluent through infiltration into soil. The effluent is further treated through biological processes that occur as the effluent is slowly absorbed into the soil.

OXIDATION POND – a specially designed and constructed pond which serves as secondary treatment for a septic tank. The oxidation pond accepts the partially treated effluent from a septic tank and through the biological interactions of bacteria, air, and sunlight, with proper retention time, complete digestion of harmful substances in the wastewater occurs.

PERCOLATION TEST – a test conducted to determine the absorptive capability of the pores in soil and permeable rock to determine if a soil can support secondary treatment of the partially treated effluent from a septic tank. This test is conducted if a septic tank with field lines is chosen as the method for sewage treatment.

PERPETUAL MAINTENANCE – the term as related to an individual onsite wastewater treatment system means that the system requires routine maintenance forever, or until such time that it must be replaced with a new system.

POTABLE WATER – water that is suitable for drinking.

SAND FILTER BED – a specially constructed bed of sand and gravel designed to accept partially treated effluent from a septic tank. Further treatment occurs through biological processes as the effluent filters through the sand. Oxygen is required for the microorganisms growing on the surface of the sand particles; therefore, it is important that the bed only be covered by a layer of washed, coarse gravel.

SEPTIC TANK – a sewage pre-treatment system that utilizes bacteria which require an atmosphere without oxygen to break down waste materials. Septic tanks must be followed by a form of secondary treatment to further treat the partially treated wastewater exiting it..

STATE IDENTIFICATION TAG – a 6 by 6 inch plastic tag with the Louisiana State Seal and a specific number which allows for identification of all sewage treatment systems installed. This tag is supplied by the manufacturer or their representative for every system manufactured and sold for installation in the State of Louisiana. After installation of your treatment system, the bottom portion of the tag is placed somewhere on the system so the installer can initial it each time they do a service/warranty inspection. The top portion of the tag must be turned in to the Office of Public Health along with the Certification by Installer form after complete installation of the system.

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II. *Types of Individual Sewage Treatment Systems*

Please note that there are several different types and brands of individual sewage treatment systems that are approved for installation and use in Louisiana. Once you have made a decision as to what type/brand of system will work best for you and your needs, it is important to learn your responsibilities for that system. Please take the time to read over the available literature supplied in this packet and learn the importance of maintaining your treatment system as it relates to a healthier environment in addition to the health of you, your family and neighbors; additionally, proper and timely maintenance will add to the overall life of your treatment system and prevent costly repairs.

If your property is large enough with an appropriate ground water depth and the soil will pass a percolation test, then you must utilize a septic tank with field lines (**Note**: there can be no effluent discharge with this type of system). Please be advised that certain areas in the State of Louisiana will not pass a percolation test and your local Sanitarian may be able to assess whether your particular piece of property may or may not pass the test based on prior geological surveys and soil maps of the area. The other instances where a septic tank can be used are in conjunction with an oxidation pond or with a sand filter bed when field lines cannot be utilized (**Note**: the size of sand that is acceptable for a sand filter bed is no longer easily available in Louisiana). The latter two secondary treatment methods require there be a discharge of treated effluent to an appropriate receiving area. **Please understand that a septic tank alone is not an acceptable treatment system; it must be followed by secondary treatment to ensure that wastewater is sufficiently treated to render it acceptable for release to the environment.**

It is very important that you familiarize yourself with whatever type of onsite wastewater treatment system you choose to have installed. As with all things, routine maintenance is a must with any type of treatment system and recommendations should be followed. Routine maintenance will prevent premature failure of your system and save money in the long run.

PLEASE NOTE: Failure to maintain your system can result in fines being assessed up to $100.00/day per violation to a maximum of $10,000.00/year if the Office of Public Health receives a complaint regarding a system that is not properly working.

It is equally important to be familiar with your local parish rules and regulations regarding individual sewage treatment systems. Some parishes do not allow any off lot discharges which may restrict you, based on lot size, soil characteristics, and ground water depth, to the use of a particular type of system.

III. *Hiring a Licensed Installer and Choosing a System*

If you do not know any licensed installers, the health unit has a list that you are welcome to look over. However, we cannot recommend any particular installer just as we cannot recommend a particular brand of treatment system. **Remember, whoever you choose to install your system must be a licensed installer.** All licensed installers are issued a license by the State of Louisiana's Onsite Wastewater Program. **(Note: A licensed plumber is not the same as a licensed onsite wastewater system installer).** If the installer does not have their license with them, please feel free to call your local health unit or Sanitarian who can verify this information. For a list of licensed installers you can visit our website at: https://ldh.la.gov/page/4686/. Another, excellent, way to find a good installer is to ask family members, neighbors, and friends, who have an individual onsite wastewater treatment system, for a referral.

We encourage you to research the different types and brands of treatment systems and make sure that whatever system (septic tank or mechanical treatment unit) you choose has been approved for use and installation by the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospital's Sanitarian Services Engineer. You want to ensure that the licensed installer you hire is endorsed by the manufacturer for the particular brand of system you choose if it is a mechanical treatment system. This information is also available from your local health unit or Sanitarian. Please remember, like most things, the cheapest system may not necessarily be the best choice, so it is a good thing to learn as much as possible about the different types of systems available in Louisiana.

IV. *Steps in the Application Process*

A. Step One – Documents Needed

The first thing that must be determined before a permit can be issued is whether a community sewer system is available to service your home, business, or other applicable structure. If a community system is available, you must use it for your sewage disposal needs. If there is no community sewage, then the property/homeowner should follow these instructions below:

The property/homeowner must be the individual who applies for the permit. If the property/homeowner is not able, due to an illness, etc. then a designated agent form must be filled out and notarized to give a designated individual permission to act on their behalf (you can get the designated agent form from your local Sanitarian at the parish health unit or from the program website at: https://ldh.la.gov/page/wastewater). You must obtain an official legible copy of your property plat. The plat must have the State Surveyors Seal or it must be designated as a "true copy" by the Clerk of Court's office. You will also need proof of ownership of the property, i.e. Deed, Bill of Sale, Act of Donation, etc. that has the legal description of the property within the document. You also need to have a 911 address assigned to your property. Bring these items in addition to the other requested information within this packet to apply for your temporary permit. Please note that your property must meet minimum lot size and frontage requirements in order to install an individual sewage treatment system (**see FORM-A**). Remember to also check local parish ordinances since they may have further restrictions.

B. Step Two – Detailed Plans

You must submit a detailed plan/drawing of all structures (houses, buildings, driveways, pool, barns, etc.) and their proposed use and location on the property. (**Please see attached examples of what your plans should look like).** Identify on the plan where all potable water lines are or will be located. If there is a private water well, it must be clearly shown on the plans along with the piping to any structures on the property (**Please note that you want to keep your sewage treatment system and all its component parts as far away from your potable water sources as possible; however, there are minimum distance requirements that must be followed**). You can speak with your local Sanitarian as to specific minimum distance requirements, or they can be obtained from our website above. For private water wells, your system and its components must be a minimum of 50 feet away.

You must show where the sewage treatment system will be installed in relation to all potable water sources. A description of distances of the sewage treatment system from all potable water sources, property boundaries, and structures must be included. A complete description of the effluent outfall pattern (where the system discharges if you are installing a sand filter bed or oxidation pond) should be included and shown on the plan (**Please note that your system cannot discharge across privately owned property without benefit of a legal right of way before reaching a publicly maintained or natural waterway**).

All parts of your sewage treatment system must be clearly labeled on your plans. It is recommended that you speak with a licensed installer who may be able to assist you with your plans. The licensed installer should be able to tell whether you will need additional and/or specific components for your treatment system based upon the landscape of your property. Your plans can be hand drawn as long as they are legible and include all necessary information. ***Please note on your plans anything such as trees, professional landscaping, etc. that may limit the installation of any part of your system.***

Please include directions to your property (FORM-B) and make sure an address is posted in a visible area for the Sanitarian who will conduct a site survey of your property.

C. Step Three – Important Information to Know

Read each of the following forms **(FORMS SF-10A & SF-11),** carefully before you sign and date them. If you do not understand any part of a form, do not hesitate to contact your local Sanitarian for clarification. **A permit cannot be issued until all the forms are signed and returned to the local health unit office.**

Please read through the educational information included within this packet as well. This is also a requirement for issuance of your permit. Most people give little thought to the process of sewage disposal, however, with the ever-increasing population growth and development, especially in unincorporated areas that have no community-type sewage services, the need and use of individual treatment systems is also ever-increasing. Unfortunately, many people do not take the time to educate themselves on the impact of improperly treated sewage and how it affects public health directly or indirectly through effects on the surrounding environment. Once you have obtained the necessary documents, sketched out your site plan, and have read and signed the included documentation, you can now return to the health unit office to begin the process for obtaining your permit.

D. Step Four – Return to Health Unit

A Sanitarian or other Office of Public Health representative will make copies of your documentation **(property plat, proof of ownership, plans)** and return your originals. They will input your information into a database and print a temporary permit with all pertinent information. You will not receive the temporary at this time. A Sanitarian must do a site visit first **(see step five)**. You will be instructed as to when your temporary permit can be picked up. The property owner is the only individual to whom the temporary permit will be released.

E. Step Five - Sanitarian Site Survey

Before you can obtain your permit, a Sanitarian must visit your property to determine if the plans you submit are feasible for your property and verify your point of discharge. While it is not a requirement for you to be there, it is highly recommended. We encourage you to be involved in the entire process from start to finish. Taking the initiative to learn all about your individual sewage system can save you time and money in the future.

If your property is gated and locked, you must make arrangements to have it accessible to the Sanitarian.

If you have animals, please ensure they are confined. Most Sanitarians will not conduct the site survey if there are loose animals (dogs, horses, cattle, etc.) on the property.

The boundaries of your property should be clearly marked so the Sanitarian can determine where your property ends on all sides.

After the Sanitarian determines your plans and specifications fit the landscape of your property, and the discharge point, if necessary, is acceptable, he or she will sign the temporary permit for release and you will be able to pick it up at the health unit on the next business day.

If the Sanitarian determines that something needs to be changed, you will be notified. The change needed must be reflected on the plans and on the temporary permit before it can be released. This is another reason we encourage you to be present at the site survey.

Note: If you plan to be present at the time of the site survey, arrangements can be made to bring your copy of the temporary permit. This can save you an extra trip to the health unit; however, you must let the person, inputting your information in the database, know that you intend to be present at the site survey and would like your copy at the time of the site visit. Again, please understand that the Sanitarian will only release the temporary permit if he/she finds everything is satisfactory.

REMINDER: PLEASE POST AN ADDRESS IF NOT ALREADY POSTED

F. Step Six – Installation of your System

If you obtained your temporary permit prior to construction of your home, please note that your temporary permit is good for one year. If for any reason you have not installed your system within a year, you can contact the local Sanitarian Services Office for an extension.

Your installer needs to see your permit and plans before he/she installs your system. We recommend you give him/her a copy and keep your original copy. In no case should the installer begin the installation without first having looked at the temporary permit with its specifications, and the plans. The installation of your system needs to be conducted as specified in the details of the plans you submitted to the Sanitarian/Environmental Services Office for approval in accordance with State rules and regulations. Any deviation from the original plan must be approved by the Office of Public Health. **If an unforeseen problem occurs, and the installation cannot be done according to the original plans, contact your local Sanitarian before you proceed.** If you do not contact your Sanitarian, the Office of Public Health is not obligated to issue a final approval on your system, and your permit can and may be revoked.

We highly recommend you be present at the time of installation so you can ask the installer any questions you may have; also, to ensure that the installer is following the State rules and regulations governing the installation.

The Office of Public Health cannot approve your site for utilities until the **final verification of installation is conducted by a Sanitarian with the installer present and the State Identification tag** is turned in to the local health unit office.

PLEASE NOTE: A Sanitarian must complete a final verification on the installation of your septic tank with secondary treatment; therefore, it is very important to notify the Sanitarian Services Office 24 hours prior to the expected completion of the installation. No part of the system can be covered until the Sanitarian has verified the installation has been conducted according to State rules and regulations.

Once the final verification is conducted and found to be satisfactory and the state tag is received, your permit will be finalized by verification, and utilities will be released. A copy will be mailed to you, or you can make arrangements with the local office to pick it up if needed sooner.

You will need to carefully read over the forms requiring your signature (SF-10ST & SF-11ST), and bring them back to the health unit to apply for your temporary permit. This is to ensure you understand your obligations with respect to the perpetual maintenance of your treatment system; this cannot be stressed enough, it is extremely important. Form B should also be filled out and returned along with the other forms, so that the Sanitarian doing your site visit will be able to find your property. Form A is for informational purposes only.

The plans examples included in this packet indicate the items that should be shown when you do the drawing of your plans. It is not necessary that you have your plans drawn by a professional; however, if you do them yourself, they must be clearly labeled with all necessary information shown, and they must be legible.

LOT SIZE REQUIREMENTS

1. Large lots, where an area of one acre or more is involved; or

2. A lot, plot or site which has a minimum area of 22,500 square feet and a frontage of at least 125 feet; or,

3. Lots legally subdivided on or before July 28, 1967; or

4. Single lots or sites remaining in substantially developed subdivisions, as long as a hazard to public health will not result; or

The basic minimum statewide lot size standard is 22,500 square feet with a minimum frontage of 125 feet.

For parishes in which the parish governing authority has enacted and enforces a formal sewerage permitting system (requiring installation of approved individual sewage disposal systems by the state health officer prior to issuance of any parish Permits)

The installation of a septic tank system is allowable if the lot size is 22,500 square feet with a minimum frontage of 80 feet.

The installation of an aerobic treatment unit is required when the lots or sites in question meet a minimum area of 12,000 square feet and minimum frontage of 60 feet.

Individual sewerage systems with the capacity up to and including 1500 gpd, that produce a treated, offsite effluent, shall include an effluent reducer as part of the overall system.

If all applicable criteria are met and the lot is a minimum of 22,500 square feet, then a soil percolation test must be scheduled.

FORM-B
Rev. 10/10

DIRECTIONS TO PROPERTY

911 ADDRESS _____

WHERE IS ADDRESS POSTED? _____
(Please post in conspicuous location that is easily visible from the road)

Please give directions to the property starting from the Parish Health Unit:
(Please include any distinguishing landmarks)

State of Louisiana

Louisiana Department of Health
Office of Public Health

SF-10ST
(Rev.07/25)

APPLICANT NOTIFICATION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

APPLICANT NAME: _____

MAILING ADDRESS: _____

SITE ADDRESS: _____

The purpose of this notification is to inform you of important requirements for which you, as the property owner, are responsible for and, by signature, acknowledge you have read and understand your responsibilities insofar as they relate to the installation and maintenance of an individual sewage treatment system.

1. **Individual sewage treatment systems shall be *installed only by individuals who are licensed* through the State of Louisiana's Office of Public Health.** An **installer's license is not the same as a plumber or contractor's license**. If you are unsure whether the person you hire to install your system is a licensed installer, you can contact your parish health unit Sanitarian who can confirm whether the individual is licensed or not. **Exceptions** to having a licensed installer are considered in the following instances. The property owner (permit holder) may install a septic tank (non-mechanical) system for their own personal use only if the property owner does the actual installation. Hiring an unlicensed person to perform any part of the installation of your septic tank will not be allowed under this exception and the system in question will not be approved by this office. The property owner may install a mechanical treatment system only after they have met the Office of Public Health's educational and licensure requirements.

2. All individual wastewater treatment plants for residential (non-commercial) use are required to have a treatment plant identification tag. This is a 6" by 6" adhesive-backed plastic tag that has the Louisiana state emblem in the upper right corner with an identification number at the top and bottom.

3. **REPLACEMENT OR RENOVATION OF EXISTING SYSTEM-** Abandoned (no longer in use) septic tanks and oxidation ponds on the property must be pumped out and filled in with soil, to grade level, or removed from the property, before a replacement system can be approved. **All** wastewater lines must be connected into the treatment system.

4. To receive final approval, **septic tank (non-mechanical) systems must be inspected by an Office of Public Health sanitarian** before any portion of the system is covered. It is important to have this final approval as many lending institutions and government agencies will not approve loans or refinance loans for residences without a record of final approval. Inspections of sewage systems will be conducted weekdays from 8:00am to 4:30pm only. ***A 24 hour notice is necessary to ensure that personnel will be available.***

5. The installation of an individual sewage system cannot be permitted unless site conditions are such that installation and use of the system are not likely to create a nuisance or public health hazard. Consequently, installation of your system, must comply with the plans and specifications detailed on the temporary permit (LHS-47) and in your plan submittal. Failure to install the system in accordance with these plans and specifications, unless otherwise authorized by the Office of Public Health, will void the permit and this Office will not be obliged to approve the system.

6. An individual sewage system will not function properly if a garbage grinder (food waste disposal) is used. Additionally, the excessive use of bleach or concentrated laundry detergents or the disposal of cooking grease or toxic chemicals into your treatment system will damage it.

7. **Please be advised that it is the responsibility of the owner of the sewage treatment to obtain all necessary permits and rights-of-way for their treatment system's effluent to reach public water ways. For any discharges to state highway ditches, state law, according to R.S. 48:385, requires written consent by the Secretary of the Louisiana Department of Health and the Chief Engineer, or his designee, of the Department of Transportation and Development. The submission of your plans does not necessarily imply that such consent will be granted.**

MAINTENANCE OF YOUR SYSTEM

1. Septic tanks should be **inspected every 6 years and, pumped out every 8 years** but, may need to be pumped more often dependent on use.
2. The **excessive use of bleach and other cleaning chemicals, concentrated laundry detergents or, the disposal of cooking grease or toxic chemicals into your treatment system will damage it.**
3. **Do not install driveways, concrete slabs, etc. over any part of the system. Do not operate heavy equipment over the system.**
4. Keep **vegetation, especially trees, from around oxidation ponds and maintain the proper fencing.**
5. **Avoid the use of septic tank cleaning or degreasing compounds**. The net effect of such chemicals is generally to lower the efficacy of your system.

Additionally, it is to your advantage to read over the State rules and regulations governing the type of individual onsite wastewater treatment system that will be installed on your property. If you are familiar with this information, it can help ensure that the licensed installer you hire is correctly following State guidelines. While the Office of Public Health issues the installer a license based on their meeting specific requirements, it does not have any control over the installer's business practices.

I hereby certify that I have read and understand this notification and acknowledge responsibility for ensuring all requirements are fulfilled. By my signature below, I understand that, pending plans approval, I will receive a permit to install a septic tank with secondary treatment. **I hereby certify that I acknowledge my responsibility to provide maintenance to my sewage treatment plant, in accordance with the requirements set forth in the Louisiana Administrative Code, Title 51, Part XIII.** ***I also certify that I have acquired a copy of the rules and regulations regarding the installation of the particular type of individual onsite wastewater treatment system to be installed and utilized on my property.***

_____ _____
SIGNATURE OF PERMIT APPLICANT DATE

_____ _____
WITNESS DATE

A copy of this notification will be given to the applicant and the original retained by the Office of Public Health.

FORM-F
SF-11
Rev. 5/11

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

STATE OF LOUISIANA

PARISH OF _____

I understand that I have received a permit to install and operate a septic tank with secondary treatment, and I hereby certify that I acknowledge my responsibility for providing perpetual maintenance of this system, for the life of the system, in accordance with the requirements set forth in Part 13, Chapter 7, §725. M. 2. of the *Louisiana Administrative Code, Title 51, Public Health Sanitary Code.* I understand that failure to provide perpetual maintenance of the sewage system may result in the imposition of fines and/or penalties by this Department as allowed by Law. I further understand and acknowledge that it is my sole responsibility to determine/ensure ownership (or similar interest) in the described property for which this permit is being issued. I fully understand that this permit does not authorize me to install a sewage system or take any other action regarding property for which I do not have ownership or similar rights.

Signed on this _____ day of _____, _____, in the presence of the undersigned competent witness.

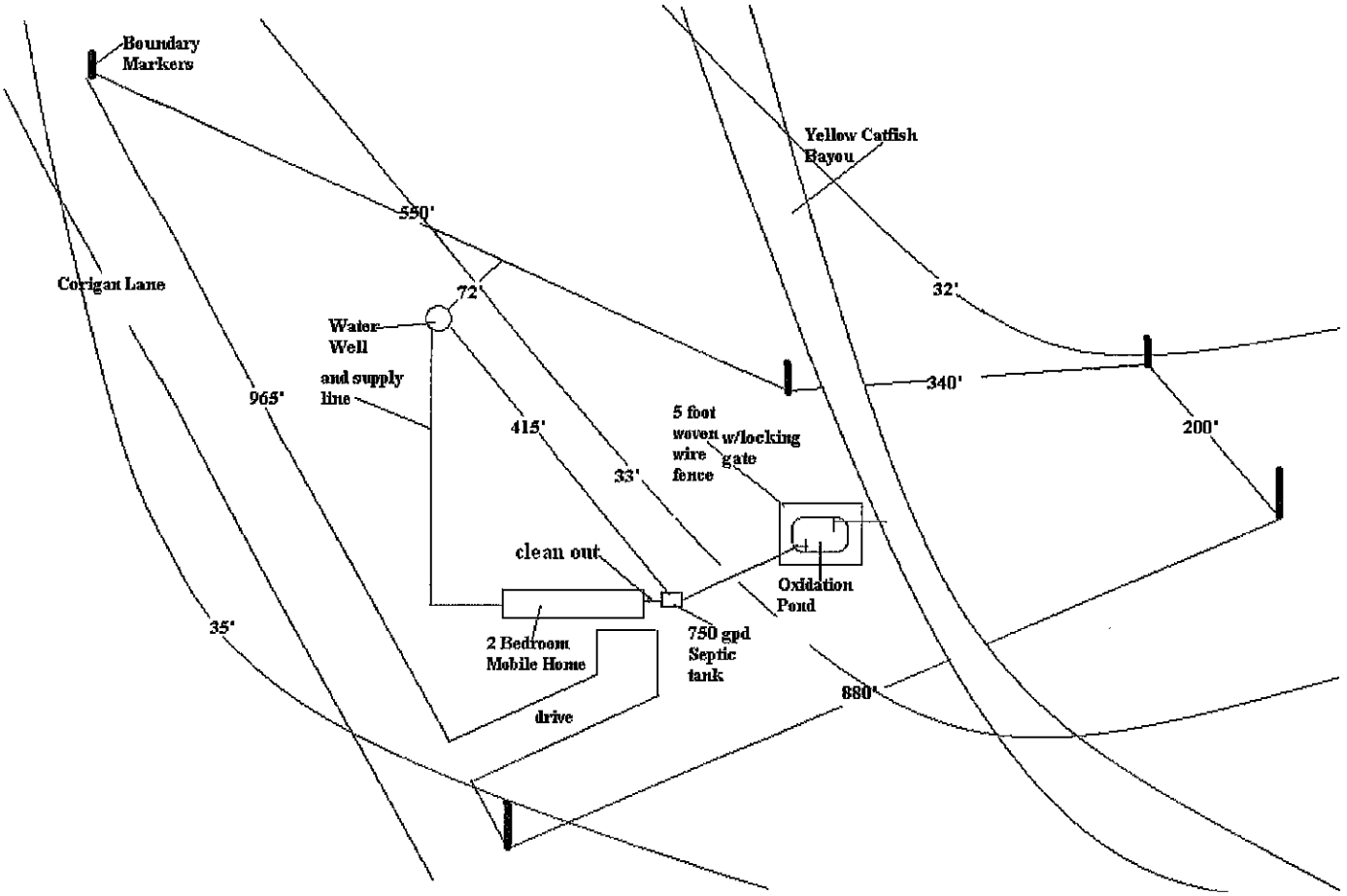
Witness:

_____
Signature

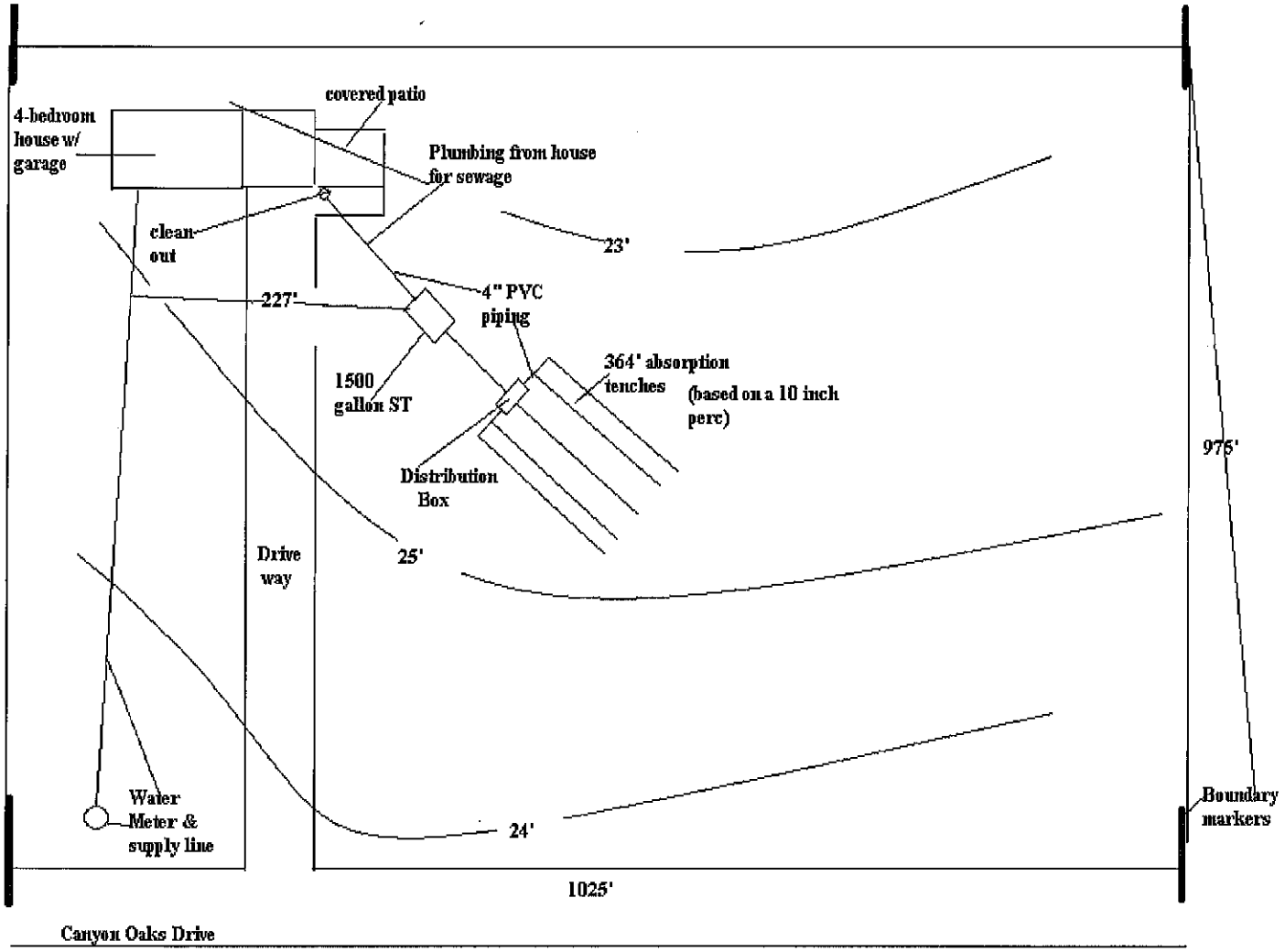
_____
Printed Name

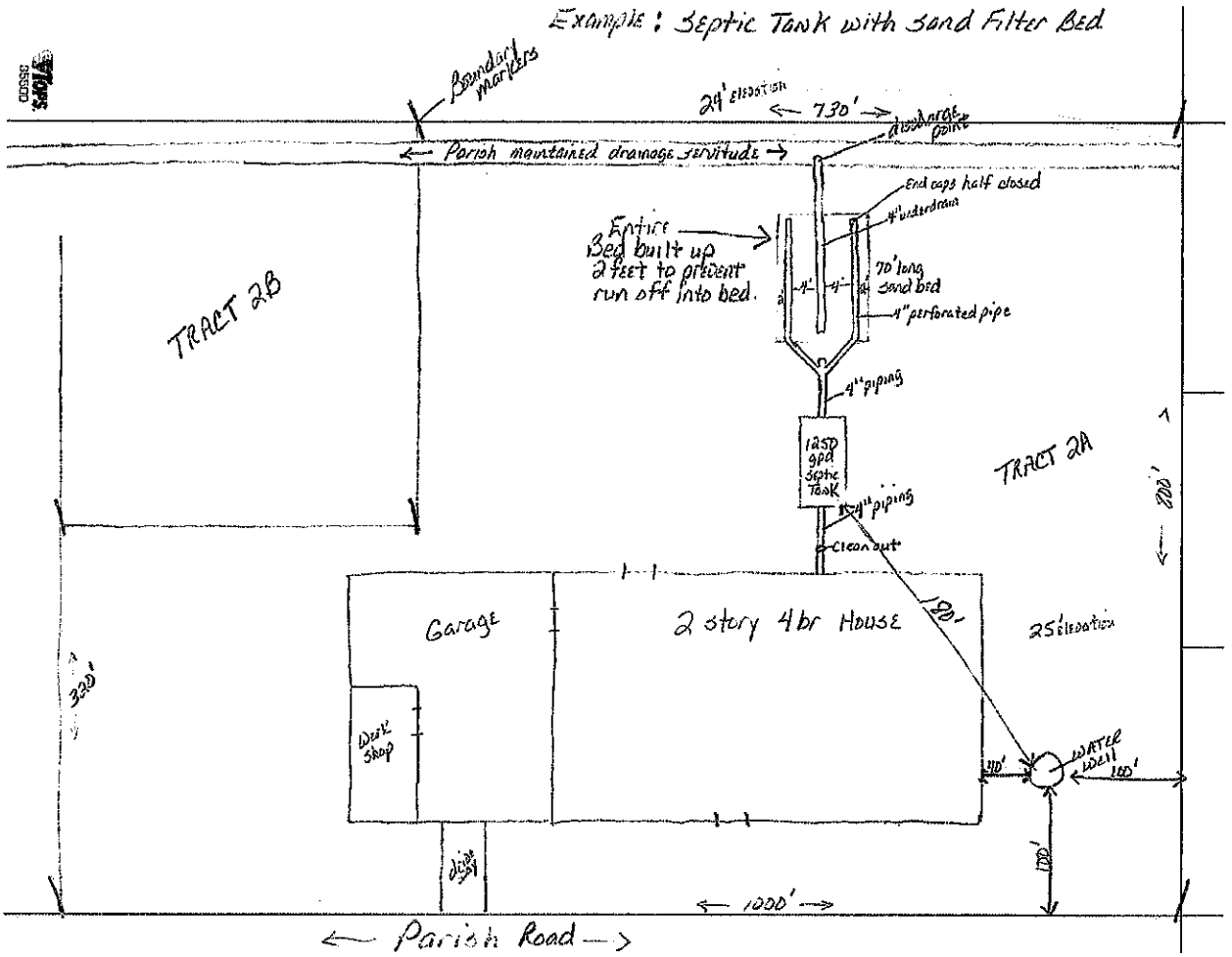
_____
Signature of Permit Holder

EXAMPLE PLANS
Septic Tank with Oxidation Pond



EXAMPLE PLANS
Septic Tank with Field Bed/Lines




Example: Septic Tank with Sand Filter Bed
Boundary markers
24' elevation
730'
discharge point
Parish maintained drainage servitude
End caps half closed
4" underdrain
Entire Bed built up 2 feet to prevent run off into bed.
70' long sand bed
4" perforated pipe
4" piping
1250 gpd Septic Tank
TRACT 2B
TRACT 2A
200'
4" piping
clean out
Garage
2 story 4br House
190'
25' elevation
320'
work shop
110'
WATER WELL
100'
100'
driveway
1000'
Parish Road