

# THE BIRCH BARKER

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from Beautiful Birch Lake

# 14 Vandalia, Michigan

LABOR DAY '87

DEAR BIRCH LAKE RESIDENT:

We are now in our third and hopefully final year of the Cass County Health department's septic system inspection program for Birch Lake.

The program is targeted to replace, improve or update septic systems that can pollute Birch Lake. To date over 30 septic systems have been improved. At least another 15 owners have promised to correct problems concerning their systems.

In the beginning, no one knew what might be found. The water samples collected from the lake indicated definite evidence of sewage. Many people thought we would find many hidden sewage drain pipes into the lake. (To date only 2 have been found) At the end of the first year permission slips were collected, allowing Health Department personnel to inspect every sewage system in the Birch Lake area.

The second year of the program was a success in that many septic systems were installed. However a bias had been built into the evaluation procedure. Factors such as the use of the cottage, the age and/or number of residents, the area or lack of area available to install a replacement system, allowed some marginal septic systems to be passed over.

Because of the continuing problems on the lake, the Yacht Club through their WATER QUALITY COMMITTEE, and the CASS COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT decided that the above mentioned factors should not be used in determining suitability of septic systems. In fact, because of these meetings it was decided that strict guidelines should be adhered to, to insure better lake water quality.

THE CRITERIA DEVELOPED FOR SATISFACTORY DISPOSAL OF RESIDENTIAL SEWAGE AS DICTATED BY THE STATE OF MICHIGAN, AND THE SEWAGE DISPOSAL REGULATION FOR CASS COUNTY REQUIRE AS MINIMUMS:

1. An onsite septic system must be at least 50 feet from the waters edge.
2. The final disposal must be at least 2 feet above the water table (lake level).  
(This means the bottom of your field tile or drywell must be 2 feet above water.)

Two feet above saturated soils is an absolute minimum, four feet is suggested as an obtainable and much more desirable height above lake level for sewage disposal that will have a minimum on water quality.

Because of the request to strictly enforce the Sewage Regulation for Cass County, approximately 40 more homeowners will be asked to upgrade their sewage systems. These improvements, you may be asked to make, are improvements to your lake and improvements to your property values and your enjoyment of the lake.

The guidelines and requests are to be as fair and impartial as possible. When asked to cooperate, please do. If you need clarification or additional help contact myself, the HEALTH DEPARTMENT, the WATER QUALITY COMMITTEE of the YACHT CLUB.

Do your part in keeping Birch Lake a clean lake.

Sincerely,

J. ROSS VOORHEES