

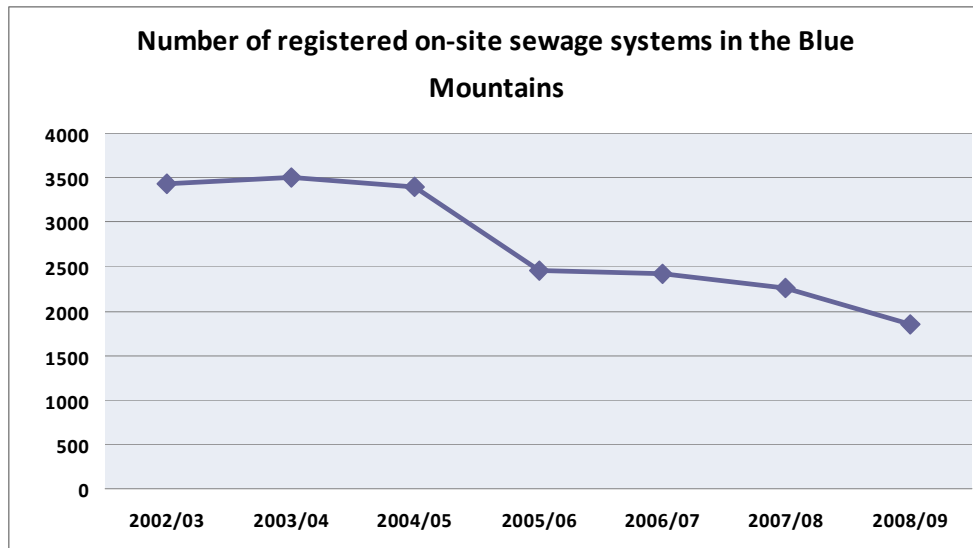
Water – surface water

What are we monitoring?

The number of registered on-site sewage systems in the Blue Mountains.

What is the trend?

An on-site sewage system is a mechanism for storing or treating sewage. The number of on-site sewage systems in the Blue Mountains decreased significantly between 2004-2005 and 2008-2009. Decommissioning of onsite sewage systems is heavily influenced by provision and promotion of new sewerage networks in areas not previously serviced. Since commencement in 2006 Sydney Water's Upper Blue Mountains Sewerage Scheme has enabled 1400 residents to replace on-site sewage systems with connection to the reticulated sewerage network. On-site wastewater management includes all decentralised wastewater systems such as conventional septic tanks, aerated wastewater treatment systems, sand mounds and filters, wetlands, composting toilets, and septic pumpout systems. The owner of an on-site sewage system is required by law to have a licence, authorised by Blue Mountains City Council for its use.



Number of registered on-site sewage systems in the Blue Mountains							
Year	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Total	3,437	3,500	3,399	2,459	2,416	2,251	1,842
Type of system	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Aerated wastewater treatment systems	482	460	483	434	444	Accurate breakdown not available	431
Septic tank and absorption trenches	2200	2200	2,200	1,333	1,299	Accurate breakdown not available	1041
Pump-out	708	800	670	646	641	Accurate breakdown not available	320

Alternative technologies	47	40	46	46	32	Accurate breakdown not available	50
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Why is monitoring this trend important?

On-site sewage systems store or process toilet waste where it is generated. On-site systems in the Blue Mountains are largely used due to the difficulty of building sewers across mountainous areas for relatively small numbers of people. These systems are prone to high failure rates. Overall, inspections by Council staff reveal that more than 50% of on-site systems are failing to meet basic operational requirements. Results of these failures are often obvious through odours, weed infestation and the decline in water quality. Such problems sometimes lead to human health issues. Poor on-site sewage treatment is one reason why water in Blue Mountains streams is considered not fit to drink. Every house that is converted from on-site wastewater disposal to sewer reduces the amount of wastewater entering the environment by approximately 900 litres per household per day or 328,500 litres per year.

Source: Blue Mountains City Council