

# Backout of Low Vegetation BMPs and Septic Connections, WTWG July 2021

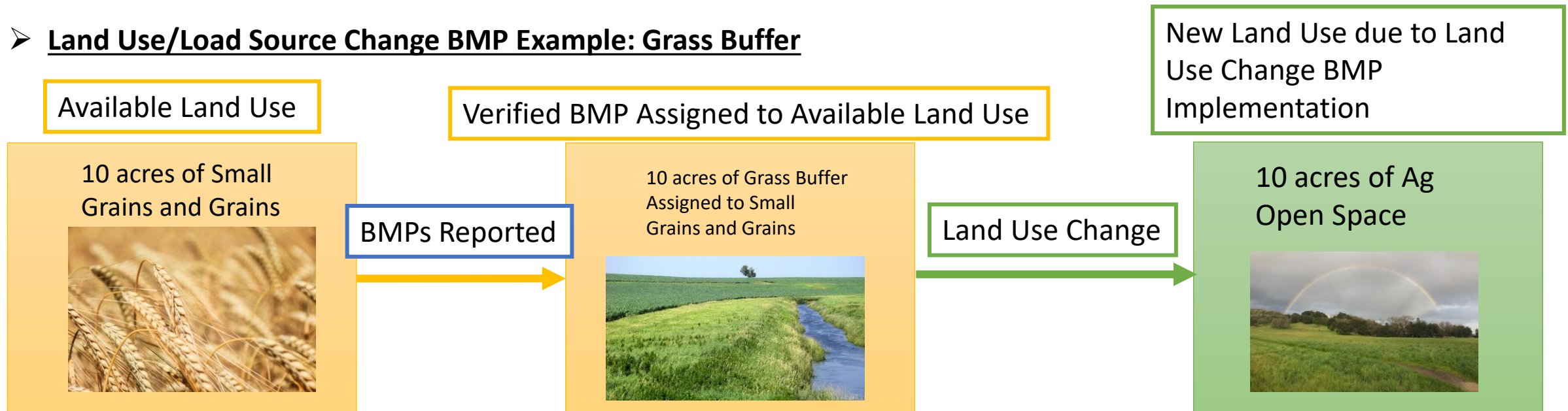
Presented by: Vanessa Van Note, Coordinator, 7/1/21

# Backout Refresher

Backout **only** applies to **land use change/load source change/land conversion** BMPs that alter a previously-projected load source to a new load source.

- Backout was designed **to prevent double counting**.
- For efficiency BMPs, **backout only affects the land use/load source change credit**.

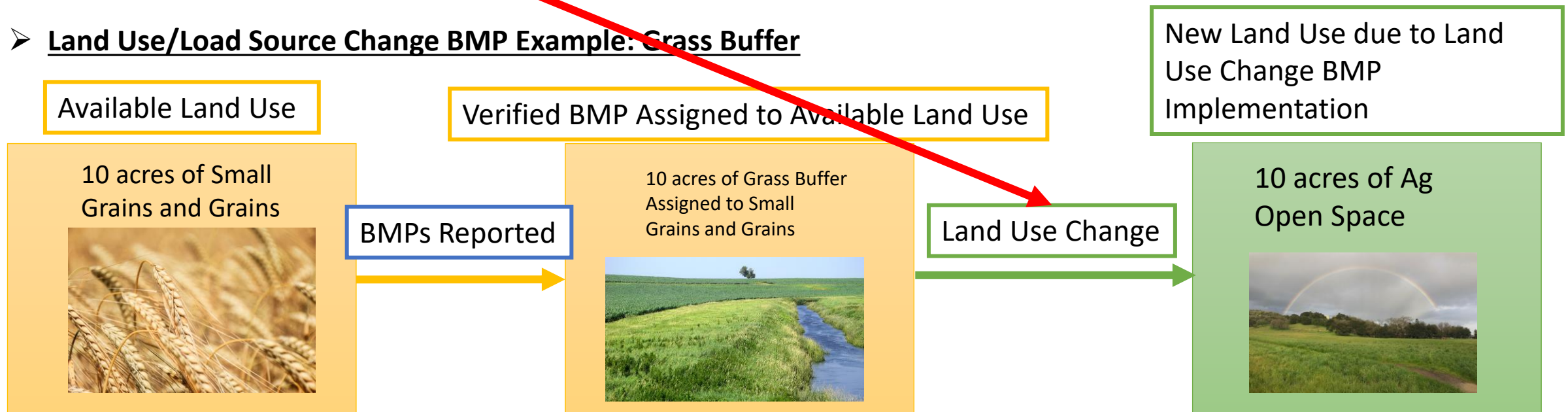
➤ Land Use/Load Source Change BMP Example: Grass Buffer



# Backout Refresher

- The purpose of the land use change BMP is to **convert the land use from a higher loading source to a lower loading source.**
- These **land use changes should be accounted** for in the base conditions data/land use projection data.

➤ Land Use/Load Source Change BMP Example: Grass Buffer



# How Backout and Verification Differ

- Two different concepts with two different functions applied differently in the model.
- **Backout's Purpose:**
  - To prevent double counting acres.

## *Where is it applied?*

- A calculation within CAST.

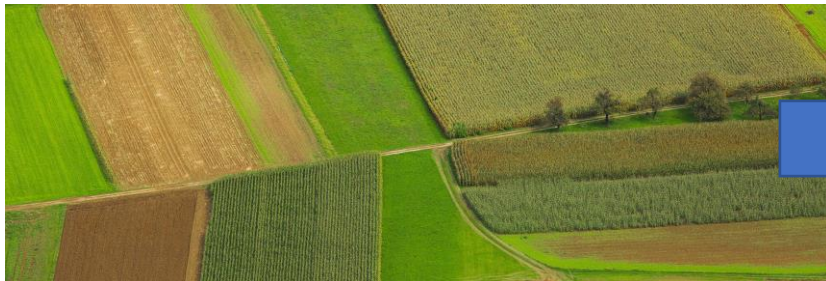
- **Verification's Purpose:**
  - To ensure reported practices are on the ground and operating correctly.

## *Where is it applied?*

- Credit Durations are applied in NEIEN.

# Important Takeaways on Backout

- **Backout aims to capture the land use change** to a land use with a lower loading rate that occurs from implementing land use change BMPs.
- Backout **does not** capture specific BMPs with point locations.
- **For Example:** A forest buffer BMP will **convert a cropland land use to a forested land use**.
  - This change is assumed to be **captured as an increase in forested land/tree canopy** in the land use change model.
  - With the land use change captured in the base conditions of the model, **the land use change should no longer be reported by the states** as this may lead to double counting the land use change.



# **LOW VEGETATION BMPs**

Grass Buffers

Wetland Creation and Restoration

Land Retirement

Alternative Crops



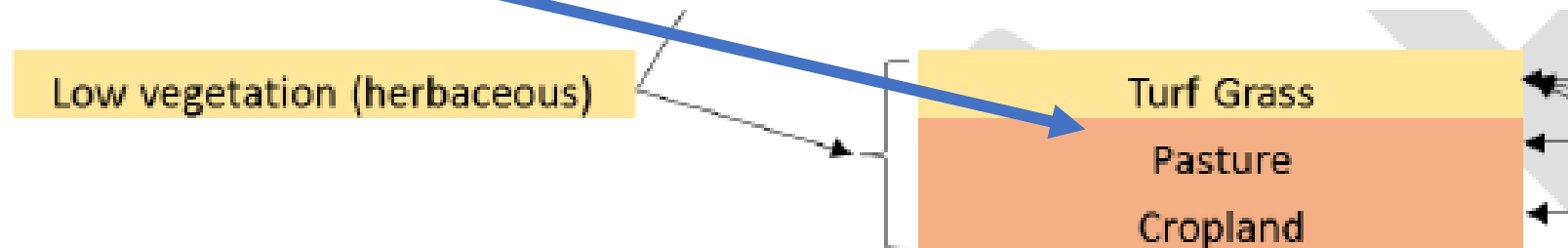
BMP	From Land Cover	To Land Cover	Current Backout Method	VA Suggestions to the Workgroup for Backout
Abandoned Mine Reclamation	Barren	Low Vegetation	The backout for land use change BMPs from 2017-2025 is 2017 progress.	n/a
Impervious Surface Reduction	Impervious	Low Vegetation	The backout for land use change BMPs from 2017-2025 is 2017 progress.	<b>VA Proposal:</b> Discontinue the backout of land use change practices that involve a conversion from one low vegetation class to another.  <b>VA Argument:</b> Ancillary datasets (wetlands, NLCD, USDA Cropland Data Layer), parcel boundaries, local zoning and use maps, and geographic cues (proximity of impervious surface, size of vegetated area, etc) do not have the resolution to differentiate between a change from
Septic Connections	n/a	<b>To Note on the Proposal:</b> If backout was discontinued, we would need another process in place to prevent double-counting.		
Alternative Crops Grass Buffers Land Retirement Wetland Creation Wetland Restoration	Low Vegetation	<b>To Note on the Argument:</b> The Ag Census is used to estimate agricultural land uses.		

\*The natural agricultural land use for the purpose of the backout is defined as the land use that is not a result of human activity. The backout for land use change BMPs from 2017-2025 is 2017 progress.

**Low Vegetation:** Plant material less than approximately 2 meters in height, including nursery plantings with or without tarp cover and natural ground cover.

# How is low vegetation classified in CAST?

- **Low vegetation is a land cover designation, not land use.**
- Difference between land cover and land use?
  - **Land Cover** represents observable characteristics of the land surface. (USDA NAIP Imagery for Agriculture)
  - **Land Use** represents how humans use the land (e.g., residential, commercial, agriculture, mining).
- Nutrient and sediment sources are related to land cover, land use, and land management.
- Classified in Phase 6 as:



**\*\*Can also include "Mixed Open"**



# How is low vegetation classified in CAST?

- **Turfgrass:** Herbaceous and barren lands that have been altered through compaction, removal of organic material, and/or fertilization (within road rights-of-way and residential, commercial, recreational, and other turf-dominated land uses (e.g., cemeteries, shopping centers) and a portion of herbaceous and barren lands within federal facilities, parks, institutional campuses)
- **Mixed Open:** Small patches of trees (< 1 acre) outside developed areas, and all scrub-shrub, herbaceous, and barren lands that have been minimally disturbed (e.g., periodically bush hogged, meadows, etc.), reclaimed, or that have internal and/or regulated drainage. These include **active, abandoned and reclaimed mines, landfills, Unconventional Oil & Gas, beaches, waterbody margins, natural grasslands, and utility rights-of-way.**

**\*\*County Planning and GIS Office County Land Use data can be used to further distinguish these classifications.**

- **Cropland:** Herbaceous and barren lands that are not classed as turf grass or mixed open. The portion of such lands that are crops is determined by the frequency at which the lands are classified as crops in the **NASS Cropland Data Layers (2008 through 2015).**
  - The Cropland Data Layers is an ancillary dataset.
  - Ancillary data combined with contextual information derived from the high-resolution land cover were used to differentiate among the potential herbaceous land uses and to make help define all other land use classes.
- **Pasture/Hay:** Same as cropland.

# Backout of Low Vegetation BMP (CAST-19) Ex. Grass Buffers

Grass Buffers Convert Land Use From:

- Double Cropped Land
- Full Season Soybeans
- Grain with/without Manure
- Leguminous Hay
- Other Agronomic Crops
- Other Hay, Silage with/without Manure
- Small Grains and Grains
- Specialty Crop High/Low

To:

**Ag Open Space** (Unmanaged agricultural land that receives no manure, biosolids, fertilizer or other nutrient applications.)



# How is Backout Applied to Grass Buffers (as of CAST-19)?

- 1. Acres of each agricultural land use, which includes crops, are estimated** based upon acres of crops reported by the Census of Agriculture.
  - (Ex for Grass Buffers: Wild Hay Harvested Area)
- 2. Estimate of agricultural land use acres is combined with mapped land uses (land cover imagery):** The estimated annual extent of agricultural land uses were apportioned from the county level to land-river segments based on the relative proportion of land-river segment acres to **county acres of total agriculture, pasture, or cropland.**
  - (Ex for Grass Buffers: Pasture for Ag Open Space.)
- 3. Backout:** Land use change BMPs reported through the 2017 Official Progress Scenario.
  - (Ex for Grass Buffers. Grass Buffers reported up until 2017 are backed out. The land use change is captured as Ag Open Space.)

# Are Wetlands Low Vegetation Land Cover?

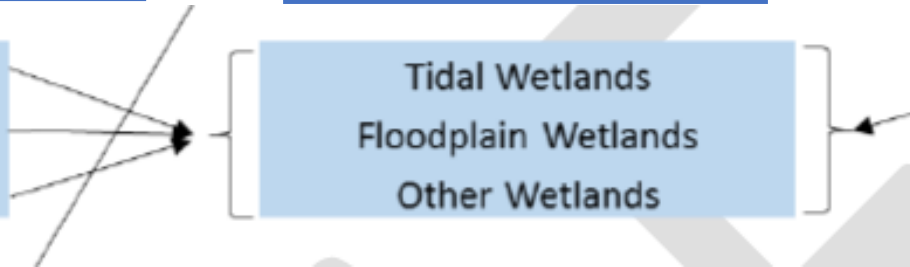
- Wetlands have been separated out into the following land use classes:

## Chesapeake Conservancy: Land Cover

Emergent Wetlands  
NWI Wetlands  
State and Modeled Wetlands

## CBP Phase 6 Land Use

Tidal Wetlands  
Floodplain Wetlands  
Other Wetlands



# Are Wetlands Low Vegetation Land Cover?

## Wetlands have been separated out into the following land use classes:

- **Floodplain Wetlands** = National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) and state designated wetlands located within the FEMA designated 100-year floodplain or on soils with flooding characteristics.
- **Other Wetlands** = National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) non-pond, non-lake wetlands, emergent wetlands mapped from high-resolution imagery outside Virginia, state designated wetlands, and state identified potential non-tidal, non-floodplain wetlands. These are typically headwater wetlands or isolated wetlands.
- **Tidal Wetlands** = National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) and state designated wetlands classified as marine and estuarine wetland systems, palustrine wetlands with water regime modifiers associated with tidal hydrological conditions (e.g., saltwater tidal or freshwater tidal), and all wetlands mapped from imagery that could be influenced by tidal characteristics/processes by having an elevation less than or equal to 2 meters above sea level.
  - Note: Tidal Wetlands are excluded from the watershed model but are being mapped for input to the hydrodynamic water quality model.



# Backout of Low Vegetation BMP (CAST-19) Ex. Wetlands

## Wetlands Convert Land Use From:

Ag Open Space  
Double Cropped Land  
Full Season Soybeans  
Grain with/without Manure  
Leguminous Hay  
Other Agronomic Crops  
Other Hay,  
Silage with/without Manure  
Small Grains and Grains  
Pasture  
Specialty Crop High/Low

To:

Non-tidal Floodplain Wetland  
Headwater or Isolated Wetland



## Questions on Backout of Low Vegetation Practice?

Should we wait for an accuracy assessment to be completed on the new land use change product for CAST-21 before making decisions on backout?



SEPTIC CONNECTION BMP

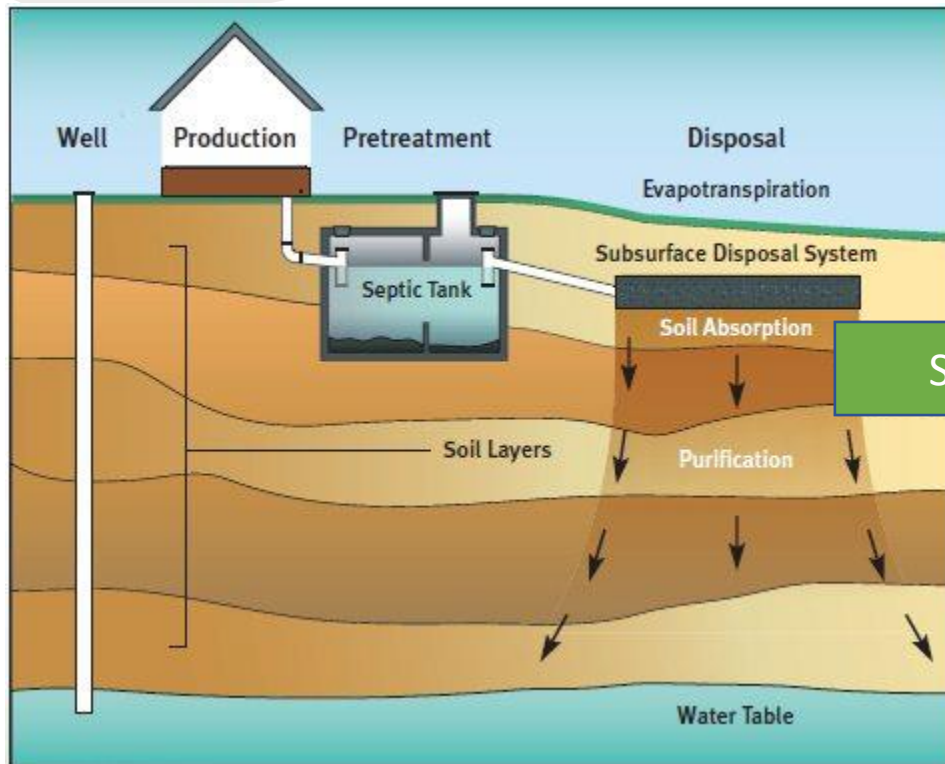
BMP	From Land Cover	To Land Cover	Current Backout Method	VA Suggestions to the Workgroup for Backout
Abandoned Mine Reclamation	Barren	Low Vegetation	The backout for land use change BMPs from 2017-2025 is 2017 progress.	<p><b>Proposal:</b> VA proposes backout of septic connections be constrained to only the BMPs encompassed by the service areas for which mapped changes are incorporated.</p> <p><b>Argument:</b> Septic connections in one county may be impacting the septic connections in another county.</p> <p>VA proposes discontinuing all backout of herbaceous BMPs as they are highly unlikely to be properly classified as a land use change when the change is low vegetation to low vegetation.</p>
Impervious Surface Reduction	Impervious	Low Vegetation	The backout for land use change BMPs from 2017-2025 is 2017 progress.	
Septic Connections	n/a	n/a	Backout is determined using census data	
Alternative Crops Grass Buffers Land Retirement Wetland Creation Wetland Restoration	Low Vegetation	Low Vegetation	The backout for land use change BMPs from 2017-2025 is 2017 progress.	

\*The land cover product from Chesapeake Conservancy does not include a True Forest Category. Tree Canopy is defined as deciduous and evergreen woody vegetation of either natural succession or human planting that is over approximately 3-5 meters in height. Land cover was used for this table instead of land use because it does not incorporate the agricultural census.

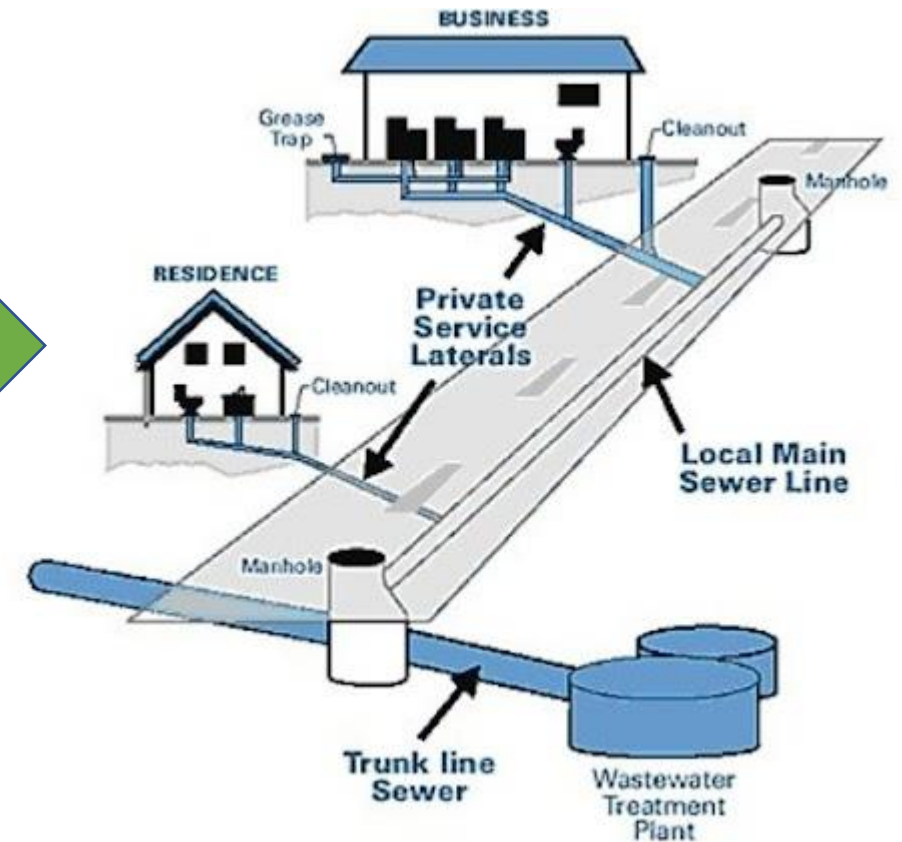
# What are Septic Connections?

- **Septic connections convert from private septic tanks to a municipal sewer system.**
- *How does this work in CAST?*
- The septic connection BMP eliminates the septic load for the number of systems selected. The load is assumed to be captured in the wastewater data. Wastewater loads are measured, and the measured load is reported. This measured load will include the loads from the newly-connected septic areas.
- *What is the load source change that occurs?*
  - The septic connection BMP **removes the septic load source** once implemented.
  - Septic load goes to 0 lbs and the load is captured in the wastewater data.

# The Load Source Conversion that Occurs through Implementing Septic Connections



Septic Connection BMP



# What informs the Septic Load Source in the Base Conditions?

## Base Conditions of Sewer Service Areas in the Model

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graph TD; A[Base Conditions of Sewer Service Areas in the Model] --> B[Sewer Service Area (SSA) Boundaries from Counties/Localities]; A --> C[Septic System Growth by County and/or Model LRS];
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**Sewer Service Area (SSA) Boundaries from Counties/Localities**

*How?*

SSAs originally collected by Tetra Tech in 2009.

- Data received for 60% of WWTPs.
- Outside of the SSAs provided, **SSAs were modeled using population density, populated place, and the 1990 Census (last year census collected WW info).**

**Septic System Growth by County and/or Model LRS**

*How?*

When the sewer model is updated for each milestone, **Census County-level population is used to control total estimated population on sewer and septic. The future population for 2025 is forecasted.**



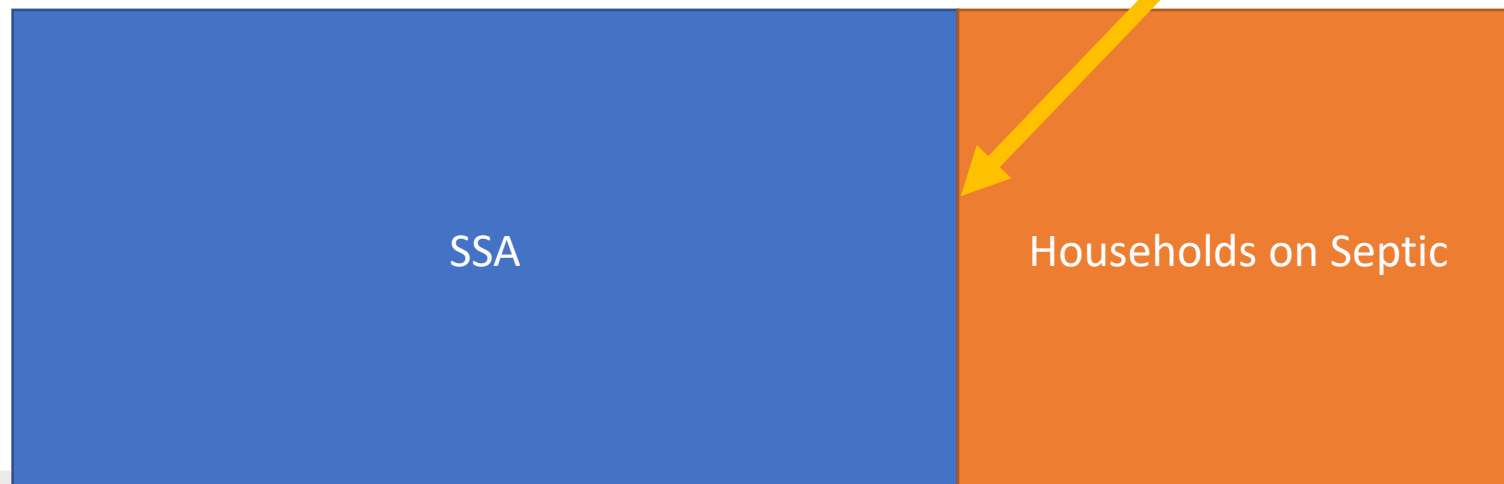
# Backout of Septic Connections (SSAs updated biannually)

**CAST-19**



Septic Connection  
BMPs Backed Out

**CAST-21: SSA Expands, Population on Septic Increases**



# How is backout applied to Septic Connections?

- Only **estimate septic connections within the mapped sewer service areas provided to us by states or localities** for the Milestone updates.
  - Therefore, there is **no duplication of data** for connections outside the mapped sewer service areas provided to us.
- Count **all households within mapped sewer service areas as being on sewer** and **all single-family detached households outside sewer service areas as on septic.**

## *Without Backout, How would double counting of Septic Connections occur?*

- **Example 1:** If our mapped sewer service areas for CAST-21 show an expansion of sewer service areas but the additional households on sewer are also reported as a septic connection BMP, they will be double counted.
- **Example 2:** Sometimes septic systems are included within mapped SSAs. If these septic systems are later connected to sewer and reported as a septic connection BMP, we will be double counting those connections.

# What informs the Septic Load Source in the Base Conditions?

- **For CAST-21**, the Chesapeake Conservancy requested SSA data from localities throughout the watershed in 2019 and 2020.
  - *This data is being assembled and compared to the current data to determine which dataset is more detailed/covers a larger area.*

## Questions on Backout of Septic Connections?

Should we wait for an accuracy assessment to be completed on the new land use change product for CAST-21 before making decisions on backout?