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For Immediate Release:

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Septic System Video Contest Winners Announced

The top three video entries to the New Hampshire Estuaries Project Septic Scenes Video Contest have been selected. John Shore of Portsmouth and Dina Sutin of Manchester won the first place prize for their video entitled "Your Septic System, Your Friend" that included an original septic system music video, an animated SCUBA diver touring a septic system tank, and a news report parody exposing a septic system abuser. Tim Gaudreau of Portsmouth won second for his animated "Fish Gone Bad" video that followed the strange evolution of a fish living in a pond contaminated by an improperly functioning septic system. And Terry Picard of Dover won third place with "Your Septic System" which explored how a septic system is like the human body's digestive tract. All winning videos, along with 2 other honorable mentions, will be shown during the 2006 Septic Scenes Awards Show, airing on Community Access Television in February 2006.

The award show is the culmination of an educational campaign by the New Hampshire Estuaries Project to teach residents in the coastal watershed that maintaining their septic systems protects the environment. Contest organizer Dave Kellam notes it is a challenge to get people to think about the issue. "Understandably, septic system maintenance is not the most common conversation topic. It's out of sight, out of mind. But if a system fails, it is a big problem for local water resources. Since the primary goal of the New Hampshire Estuaries Project is to protect water quality, we were faced with the challenge of getting people to talk about a subject they want to ignore."

That challenge is what spawned the Septic System Video Contest. The contest solicited diverse and engaging video shorts created by citizens for citizens about septic system maintenance. Kellam summarizes the entries as "extremely creative, informative, and simply entertaining to watch." The New Hampshire Estuaries Project will compile the top five videos into a 30 minute awards show that will air on Community Access Television throughout the Seacoast region.

John Shore, a graphics supervisor in Dover, was inspired to create the winning short with video partner Dina Sutin, partly because of its social benefits. "It's great to be involved in a worthwhile project that will help to educate people on the very important subject of septic system maintenance. I feel honored that our video in some small way may help the environment."

Second place winner Tim Gaudreau, a local artist who specializes in environmental awareness pieces, recognized the importance of getting people's attention before education can occur. "I was really inspired by the potential of humor as a tool to address a very real and relevant issue to our local ecosystem. If something is curious and unexpected, maybe it could hook people long enough to create some conversation and get a real lesson across."

All of the videos referenced some part of the NH Department of Environmental Services' recommendations to inspect septic systems yearly, pump them out every three years, and keep harmful products out of septic systems. For a complete list of recommendations, call the DES Subsurface Systems Bureau, (603) 271-3501 or read "What You Should Know about Your Septic System to Prevent Costly Repairs" at <http://www.des.state.nh.us/gw/gw0405.htm>.

The New Hampshire Estuaries Project is a collaborative program housed at the University of New Hampshire that involves governmental agencies, researchers, non-profit organizations, businesses, and the public to protect, enhance, and monitor the environmental quality of the state's coastal bays and rivers. The NHEP Management Plan, project reports, and other resources are available at www.nhep.unh.edu.

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