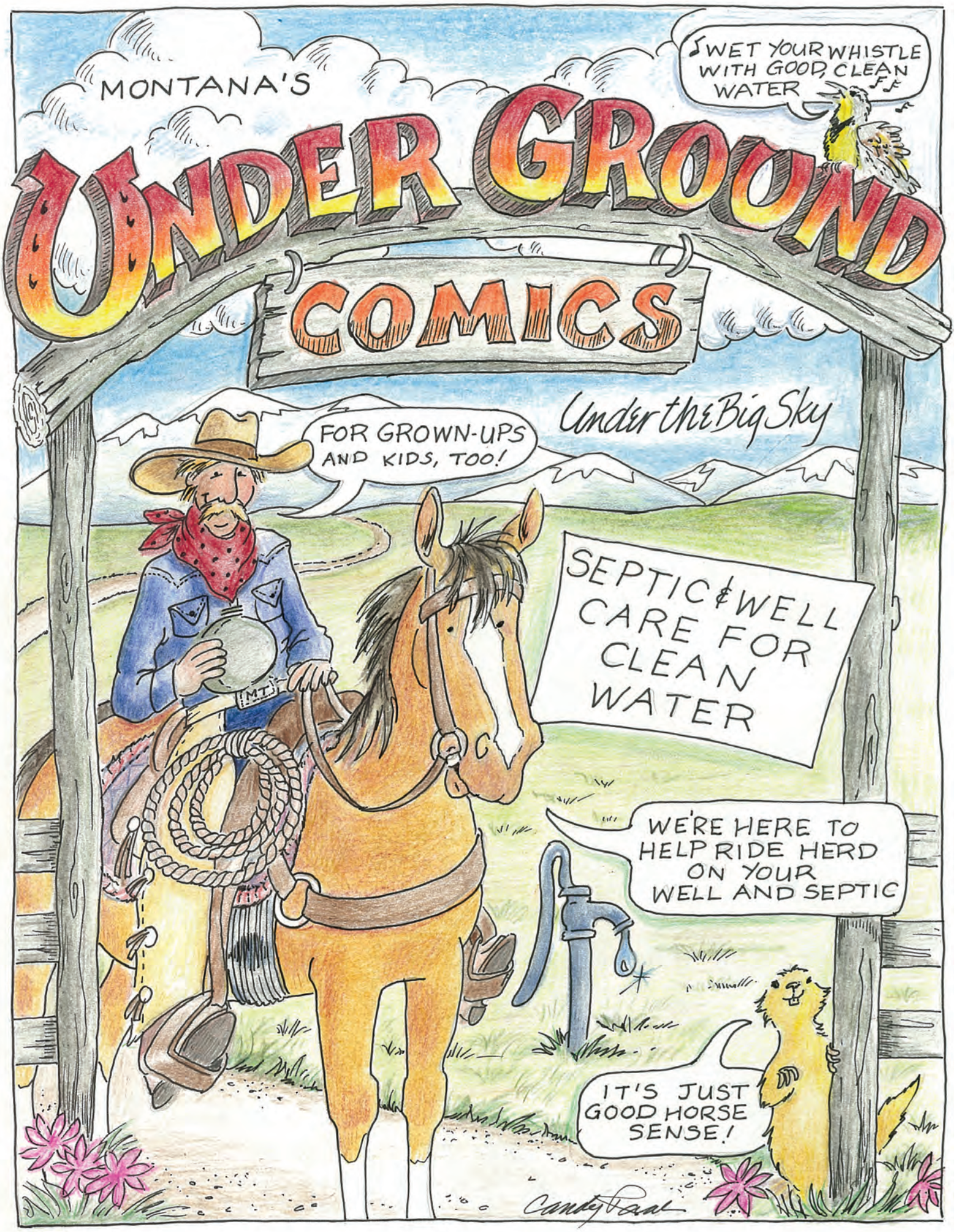
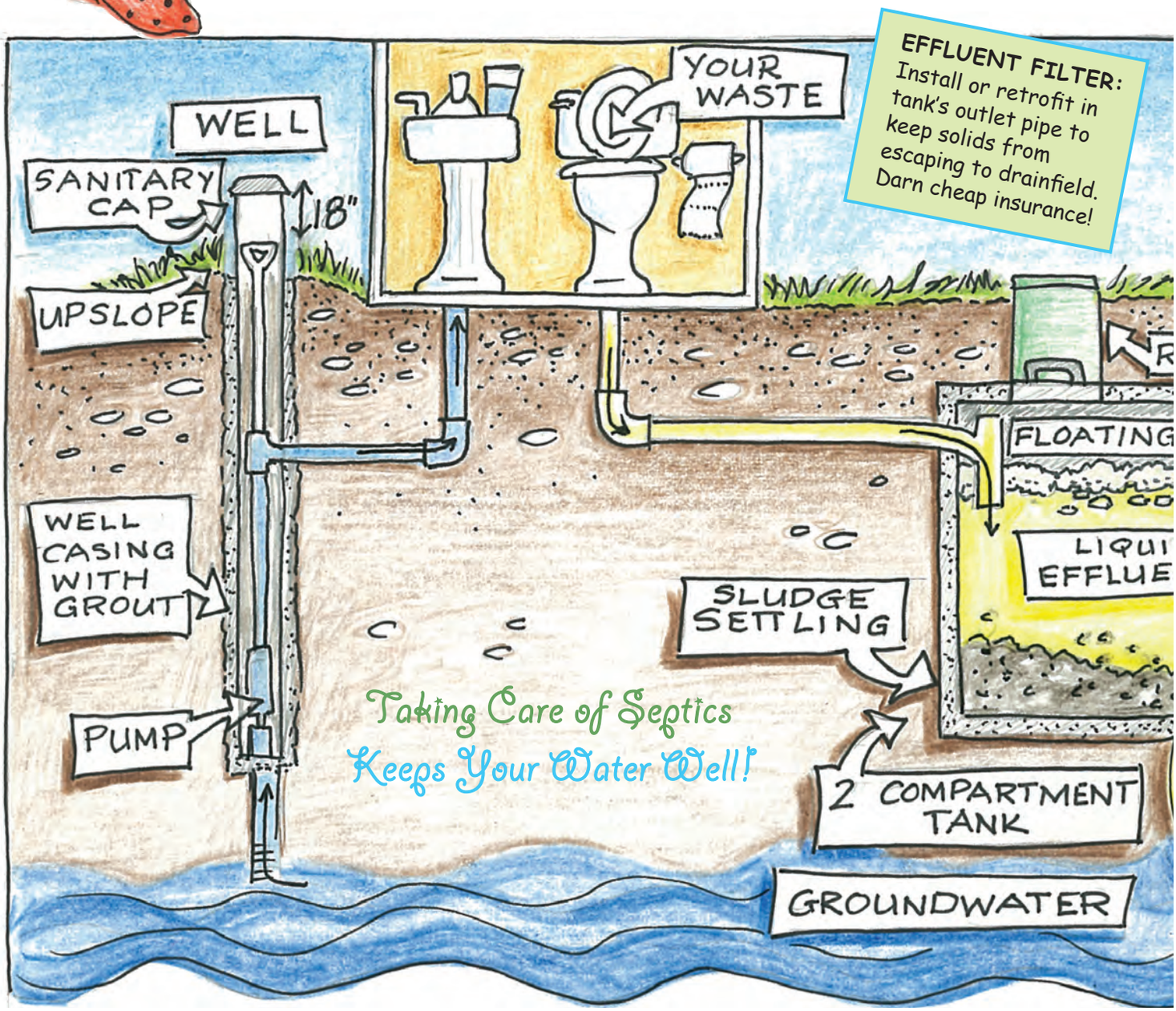

MONTANA'S
UNDER GROUND
COMICS
WET YOUR WHISTLE WITH GOOD, CLEAN WATER
Under the Big Sky
FOR GROWN-UPS AND KIDS, TOO!
SEPTIC & WELL CARE FOR CLEAN WATER
WE'RE HERE TO HELP RIDE HERD ON YOUR WELL AND SEPTIC
IT'S JUST GOOD HORSE SENSE!

Septics Anatomy:

HOWDY, PARDNER! IF YOU LIVE IN RURAL MONTANA YER PROB'LY THE PROUD OWNER/OPERATOR OF YOUR VERY OWN UNDERGROUND SEWAGE TREATMENT PLANT & WATER SUPPLY. IT'S YOUR SEPTIC SYSTEM & WELL!! BURIED OUT THERE IN THE BACKYARD.... SOMEWHERE.... AND, BY GOLLY, YOU ARE THE UTILITY COMPANY. SO TREAT YOUR SEPTIC RIGHT & YOUR WATER WELL, BECAUSE YER DRINKIN' IT!



After sludge settles down, liquid effluent (your wastewater) flows out to the drainfield and seeps through drainpipe holes into the soil "filter" where it's purified by microbial critters in soil pores. Percolating down to recharge groundwater, your treated wastewater feeds your well, your neighbors' wells—plus gardens, irrigation, and our lakes & streams! You want it to be good soil, and clean water.

Bacteria in the tank work to break down the sludge layer, but eventually ... ALL TANKS NEED TO BE PUMPED! All tanks. All.

DO YOU KNOW...

WHERE YOUR TANK IS?
HOW BIG IT IS?
WHEN IT WAS LAST PUMPED?
WHERE YOUR DRAINFIELD IS?

Once you find it, map it!

HEY—Community Systems & Townies! Even if you're on a community system or live in town, these guidelines make smart sense too. It all goes somewhere, and our water's all connected!

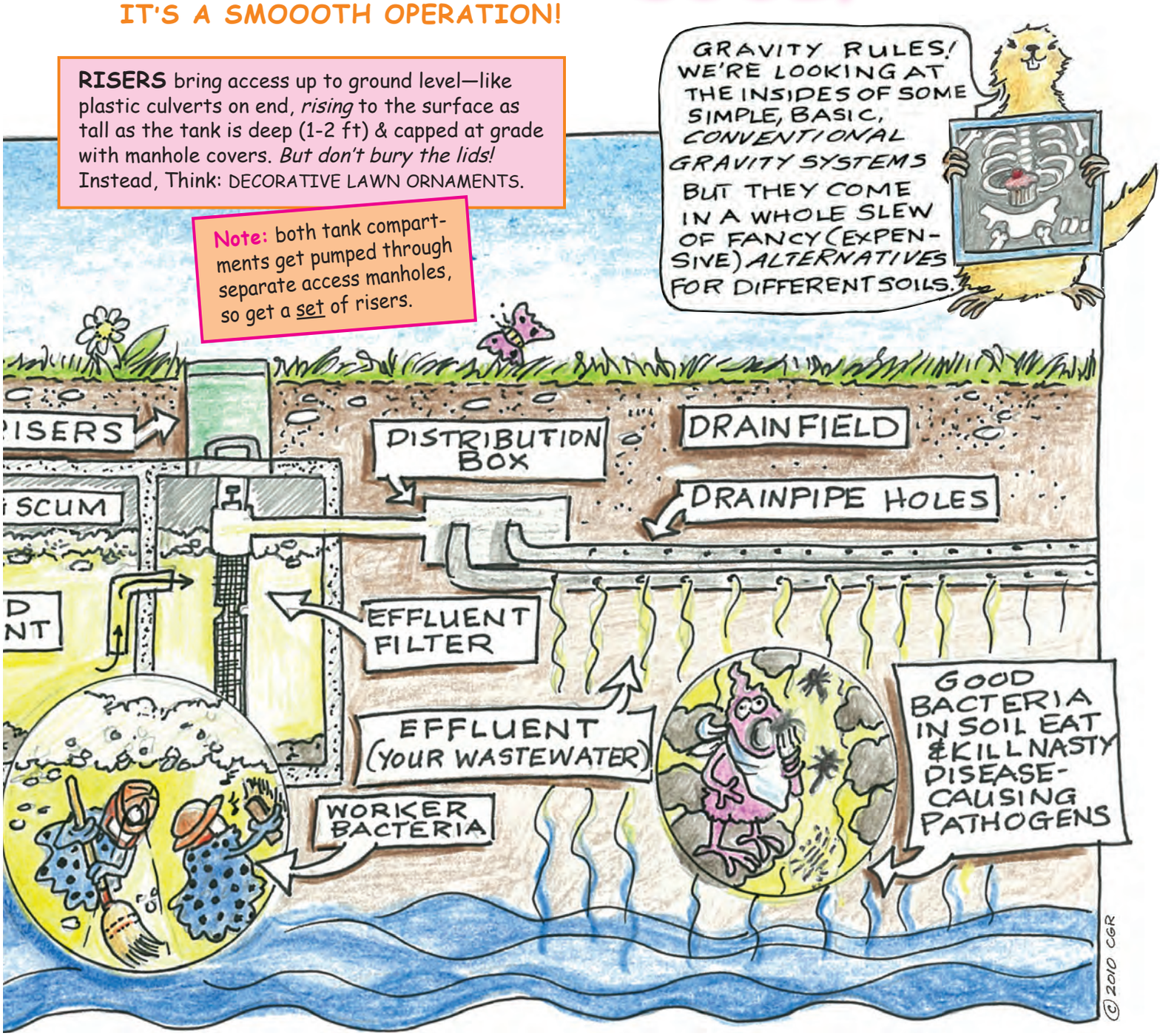
HOW THEY WORK & WHY THEY FAIL

When Things Are GOOD,

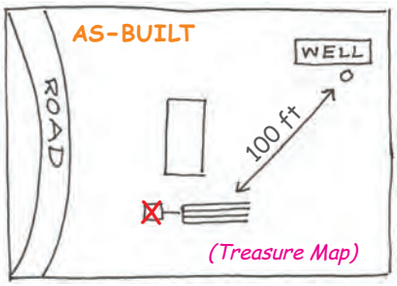
IT'S A SMOOOTH OPERATION!

RISERS bring access up to ground level—like plastic culverts on end, *rising* to the surface as tall as the tank is deep (1-2 ft) & capped at grade with manhole covers. *But don't bury the lids!* Instead, Think: DECORATIVE LAWN ORNAMENTS.

Note: both tank compartments get pumped through separate access manholes, so get a set of risers.



Most counties now keep records of new systems with an AS-BUILT, a drawing of the house footprint & property lines in relation to the septic and well—*as it was built!* Ask the county for yours, or draw one yourself!

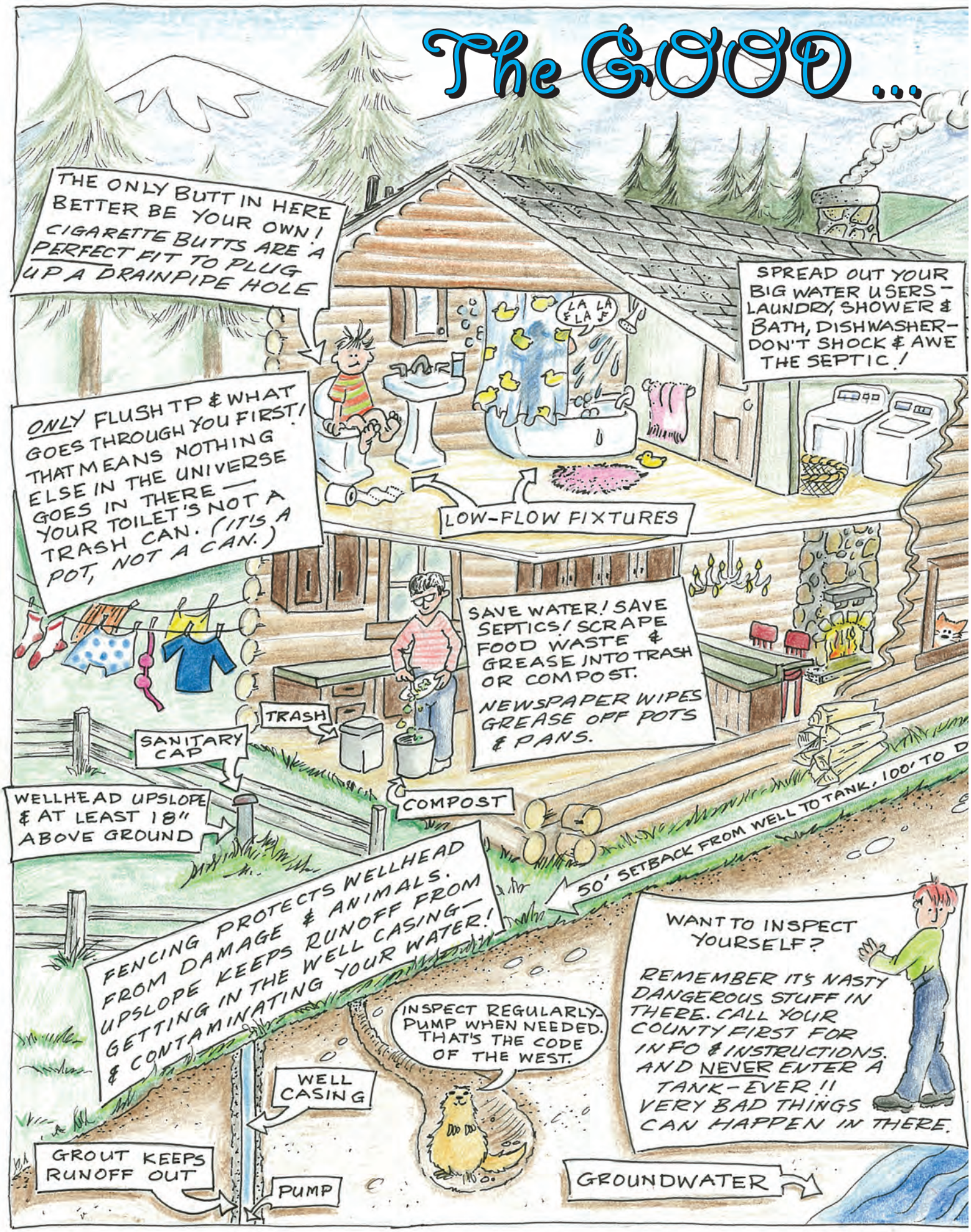


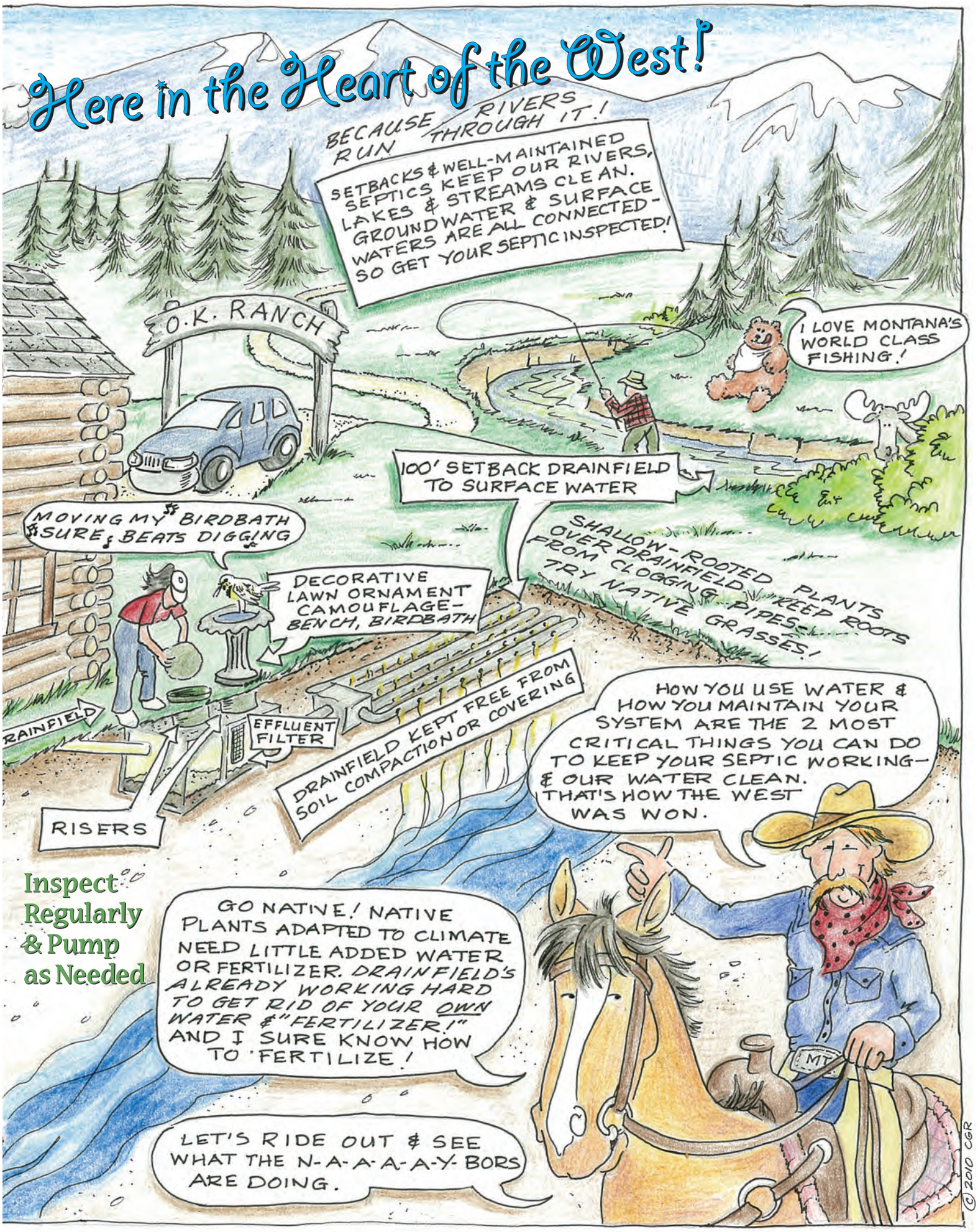
What's buried out in your backyard?

Doesn't matter where you live, in what kind of house, how big it is—or if your granddaddy homesteaded the place or you're a shiny new city slicker. What'll make YOUR septic the GOOD, the BAD, or the Downright UGLY is all about:

How you take care of it, &
How you live with it.

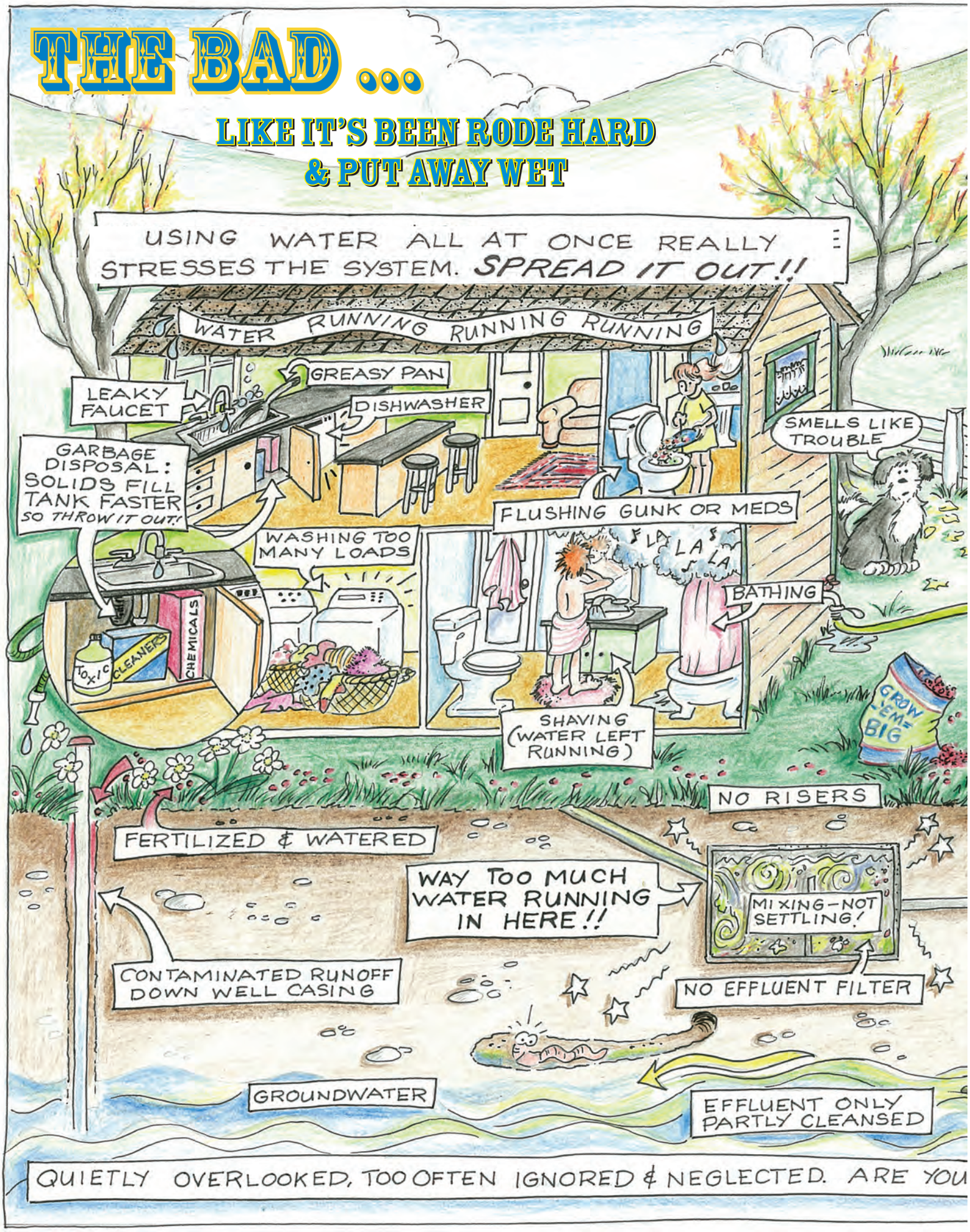
Follow us in the Pore of Discovery to explore how to protect your well & septic—*& how to discover signs of trouble!*

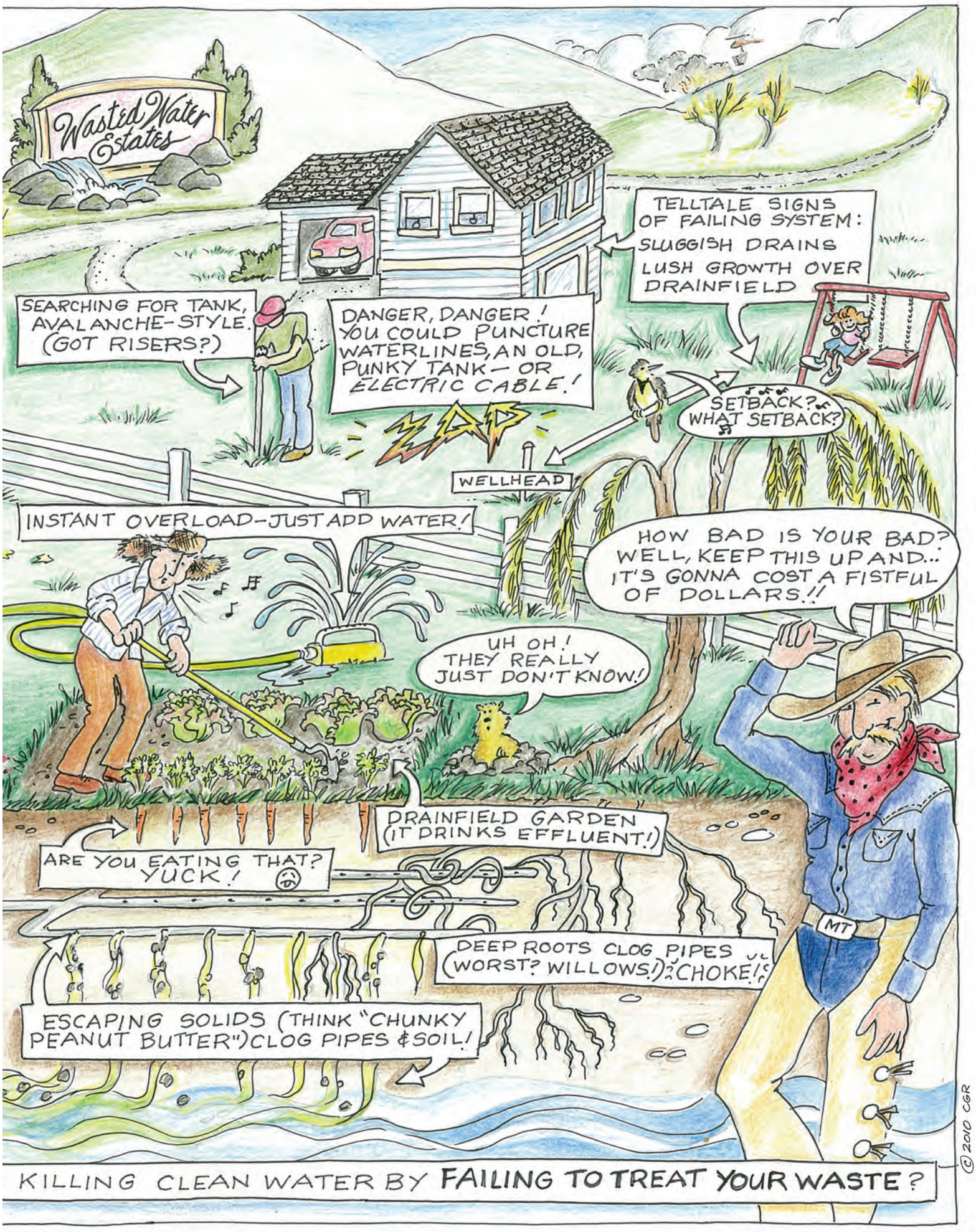

The GOOD ...
THE ONLY BUTT IN HERE BETTER BE YOUR OWN! CIGARETTE BUTTS ARE A PERFECT FIT TO PLUG UP A DRAINPIPE HOLE
LA LA LA LA
SPREAD OUT YOUR BIG WATER USERS – LAUNDRY, SHOWER & BATH, DISHWASHER – DON'T SHOCK & AWE THE SEPTIC!
ONLY FLUSH TP & WHAT GOES THROUGH YOU FIRST! THAT MEANS NOTHING ELSE IN THE UNIVERSE GOES IN THERE — YOUR TOILET'S NOT A TRASH CAN. (IT'S A POT, NOT A CAN.)
LOW-FLOW FIXTURES
SAVE WATER! SAVE SEPTICS! SCRAPE FOOD WASTE & GREASE INTO TRASH OR COMPOST.
NEWSPAPER WIPES GREASE OFF POTS & PANS.
TRASH
SANITARY CAP
COMPOST
WELLHEAD UPSLOPE & AT LEAST 18" ABOVE GROUND
50' SETBACK FROM WELL TO TANK, 100' TO D
FENCING PROTECTS WELLHEAD FROM DAMAGE & ANIMALS. UPSLOPE KEEPS RUNOFF FROM GETTING IN THE WELL CASING & CONTAMINATING YOUR WATER!
WANT TO INSPECT YOURSELF?
REMEMBER IT'S NASTY DANGEROUS STUFF IN THERE. CALL YOUR COUNTY FIRST FOR INFO & INSTRUCTIONS. AND NEVER ENTER A TANK – EVER!! VERY BAD THINGS CAN HAPPEN IN THERE.
INSPECT REGULARLY – PUMP WHEN NEEDED. THAT'S THE CODE OF THE WEST.
WELL CASING
GROUT KEEPS RUNOFF OUT
PUMP
GROUNDWATER


Here in the Heart of the West!
BECAUSE RIVERS RUN THROUGH IT!
SETBACKS & WELL-MAINTAINED SEPTICS KEEP OUR RIVERS, LAKES & STREAMS CLEAN. GROUNDWATER & SURFACE WATERS ARE ALL CONNECTED - SO GET YOUR SEPTIC INSPECTED!
O.K. RANCH
I LOVE MONTANA'S WORLD CLASS FISHING!
100' SETBACK DRAINFIELD TO SURFACE WATER
MOVING MY BIRDBATH SURE BEATS DIGGING
DECORATIVE LAWN ORNAMENT CAMOUFLAGE - BENCH, BIRDBATH
SHALLOW-ROOTED PLANTS OVER DRAINFIELD KEEP ROOTS FROM CLOGGING PIPES - TRY NATIVE GRASSES!
DRAINFIELD
EFFLUENT FILTER
DRAINFIELD KEPT FREE FROM SOIL COMPACTION OR COVERING
RISERS
HOW YOU USE WATER & HOW YOU MAINTAIN YOUR SYSTEM ARE THE 2 MOST CRITICAL THINGS YOU CAN DO TO KEEP YOUR SEPTIC WORKING - & OUR WATER CLEAN. THAT'S HOW THE WEST WAS WON.
Inspect Regularly & Pump as Needed
GO NATIVE! NATIVE PLANTS ADAPTED TO CLIMATE NEED LITTLE ADDED WATER OR FERTILIZER. DRAINFIELD'S ALREADY WORKING HARD TO GET RID OF YOUR OWN WATER & "FERTILIZER!" AND I SURE KNOW HOW TO FERTILIZE!
LET'S RIDE OUT & SEE WHAT THE N-A-A-A-A-Y-BORS ARE DOING.
MT
© 2010 CGR

THE BAD ...

LIKE IT'S BEEN RODE HARD & PUT AWAY WET

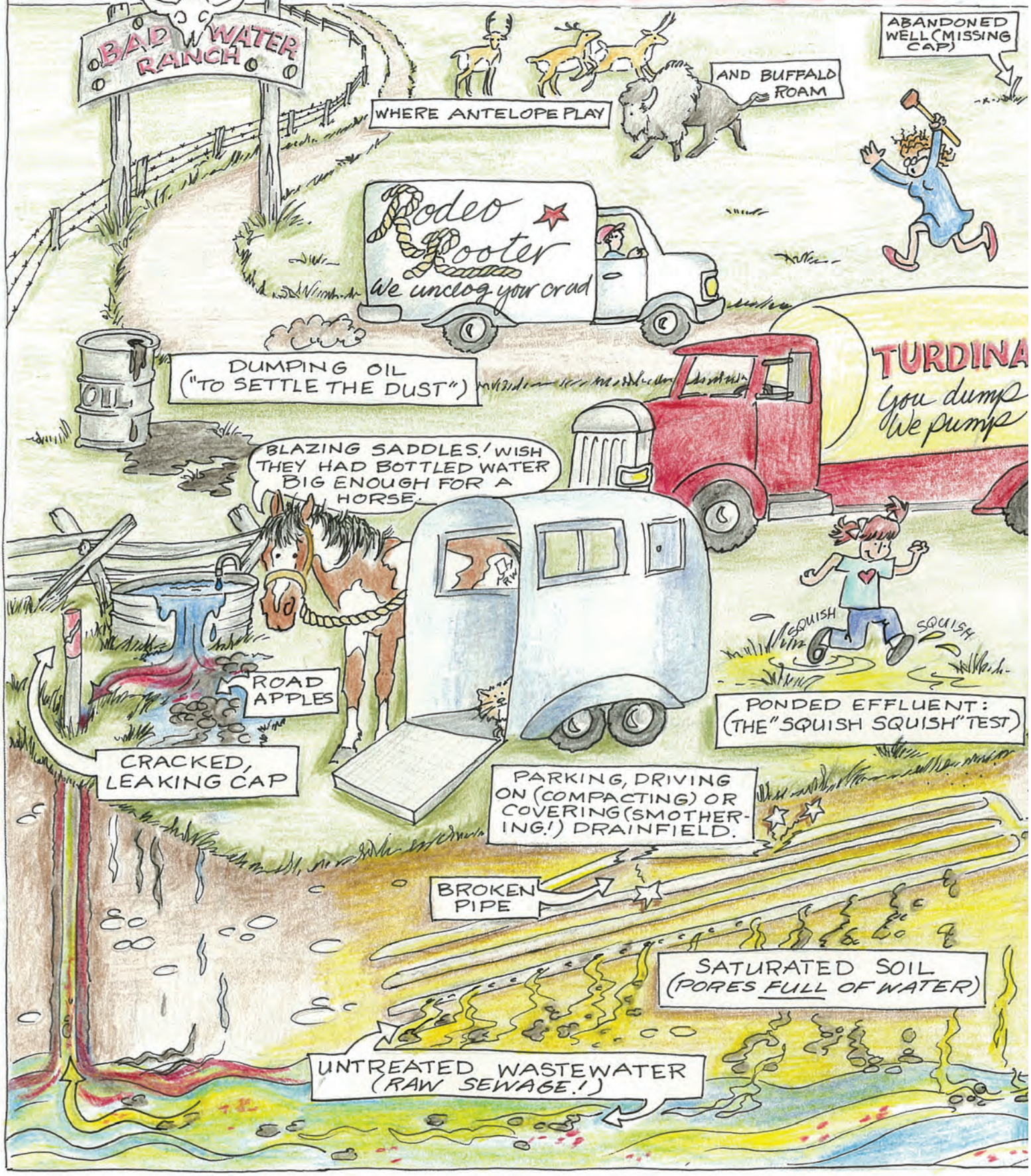


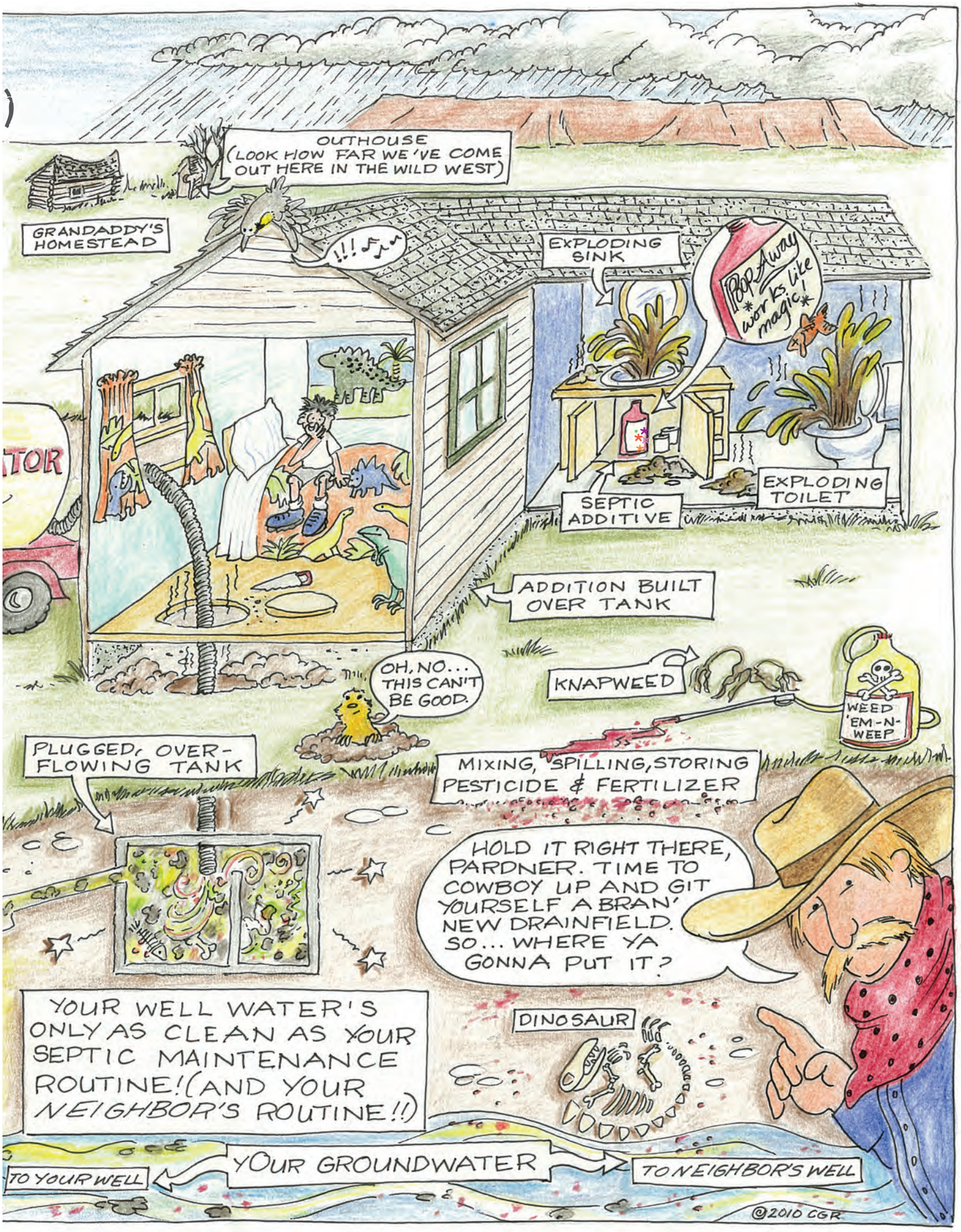


KILLING CLEAN WATER BY **FAILING TO TREAT YOUR WASTE?**

... and THE DOWNRIGHT UGLY!!

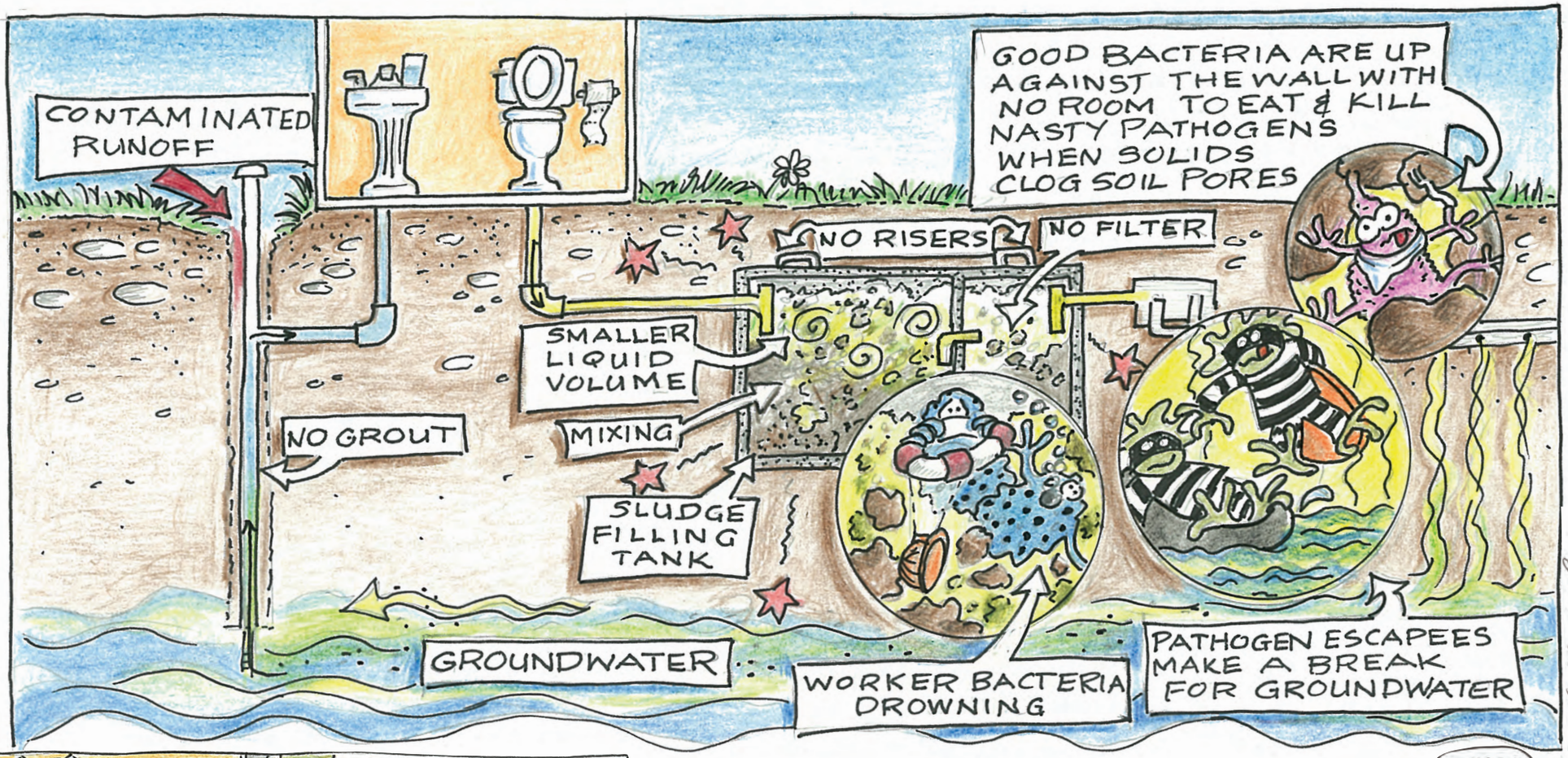
Bite the Bullet, It's Dead (R.I.P.




OUTHOUSE (LOOK HOW FAR WE'VE COME OUT HERE IN THE WILD WEST)
GRANDADDY'S HOMESTEAD
!!!
EXPLODING SINK
Pop Away works like magic!
EXPLODING TOILET
SEPTIC ADDITIVE
ADDITION BUILT OVER TANK
OH, NO... THIS CAN'T BE GOOD.
KNAPWEED
WEED 'EM-N-WEEP
PLUGGED, OVER-FLOWING TANK
MIXING, SPILLING, STORING PESTICIDE & FERTILIZER
HOLD IT RIGHT THERE, PARDNER. TIME TO COWBOY UP AND GIT YOURSELF A BRAN' NEW DRAINFIELD. SO... WHERE YA GONNA PUT IT?
YOUR WELL WATER'S ONLY AS CLEAN AS YOUR SEPTIC MAINTENANCE ROUTINE! (AND YOUR NEIGHBOR'S ROUTINE!!)
DINOSAUR
TO YOUR WELL
YOUR GROUNDWATER
TO NEIGHBOR'S WELL
©2010 CGR

When Good Systems Go BAD ... A FAILURE WAITING TO HAPPEN

A tank full of solids leaves less room for liquid so it shortens settling time, flowing out to drainfield with solids mixed in.
Reduced wastewater-treatment capacity means your effluent's not always completely clean before reaching groundwater—and your well!



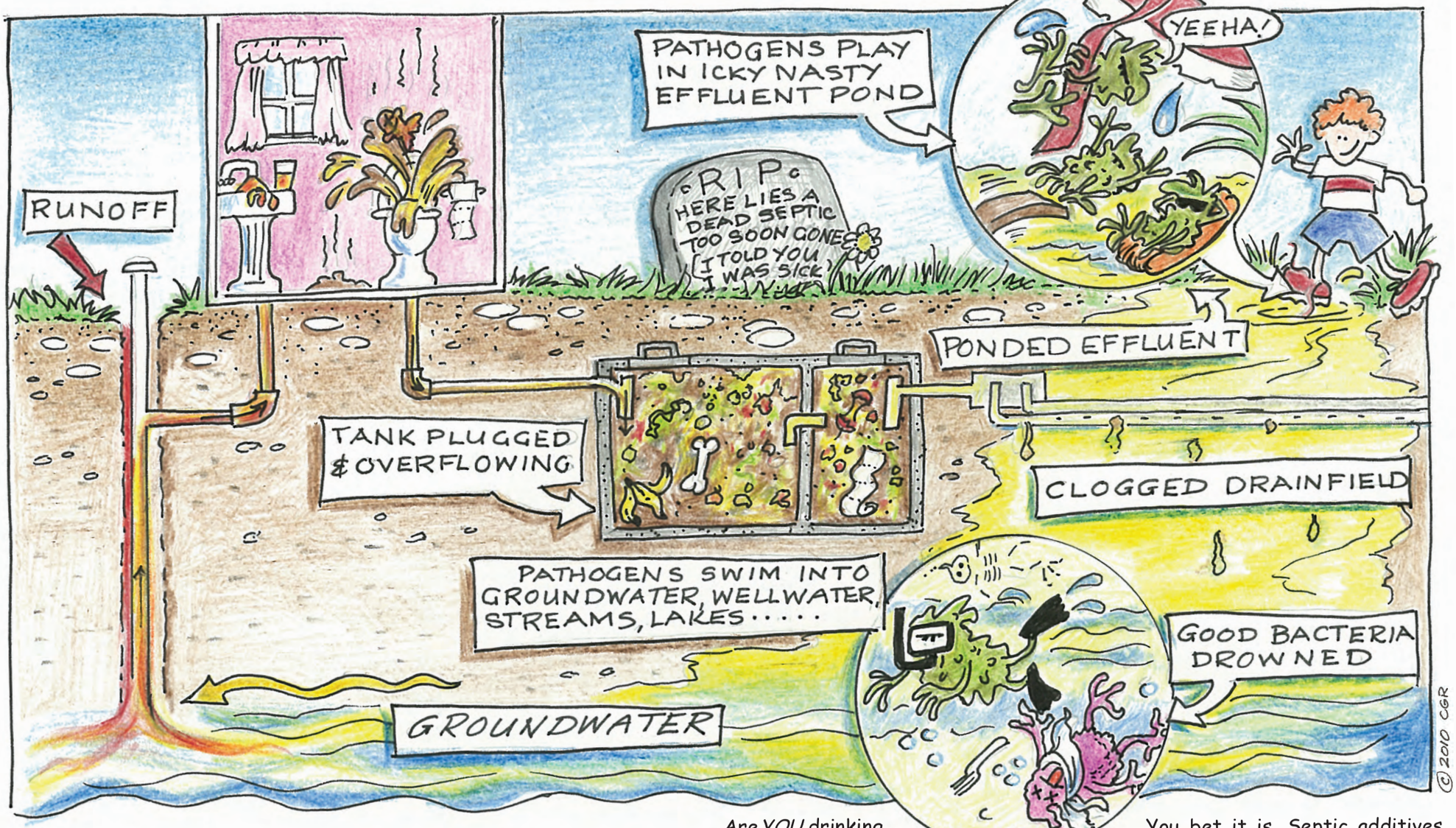
SEND IN THE RESERVES!

THERE'S NO FIXING A FAILED DRAINFIELD. With soil pores compacted or clogged with solids, no amount of air or water pumped in will flush 'em out or plump 'em up again. You'll have to put in a new drainfield, in a different area designated and protected for a replacement or "reserve." *Find yours!* Without suitable soils in reserve, folks might have to pump effluent off-site—or even buy more property!

... or Turn Downright UGLY!

YUP, IT'S DEAD, ALRIGHT

Tank plugged full of solids overflows to clog pipes, soil pores—& plumbing! Clogged, sluggish, & backed-up, this is your sewage coming back to haunt you. You will be visited by seepage, leakage, & FAILURE—contaminating groundwater, well water— ***and your drinking water!***



SEPTIC SYSTEMS & WELL SEPARATION

Wells & septic systems may be too close in some of our older communities, where a well's 100' setback Safety Circle could overlap with neighboring septics.

Are *YOU* drinking from nearby septic failures? Gives a whole new meaning to your Neighborhood Circle.

ADDITIVES: TO ADD, OR NOT TO ADD, IS THAT THE QUESTION?

You bet it is. Septic additives could harm—and pretty much don't help. Look at it this way: Caustic chemicals or biological agents designed to **BREAK DOWN SOLIDS** can ***BREAK SOLIDS DOWN*** to float out the tank & clog the drainfield. *Be careful what you wish for!*

Ride Herd on Your Septic!

LOCATE *(find it!)*

INSPECT regularly

PUMP as needed

& PROTECT!

- Retrofit Risers & Effluent Filters
- Think Compost & Trash vs. Garbage Disposal
- Use Least Amount of Toxic Chemicals & Cleaners (USE RECOMMENDED DOSE, HANDLE & STORE CAREFULLY)
- Landscape Drainfield with Shallow-Rooted Plants, Not Deep
- Keep Sprinklers, Runoff, & Contaminants Away from Drainfield
- Protect Well—3 best ways:
  MONITOR WATER QUALITY (NITRATES, BACTERIA), SEPTIC MAINTENANCE, & CURB RUNOFF POLLUTION
- Watch Water Use & "Shock" Loads
- Keep Good Records—SEPTIC/WELL LOG (FIND IT, START IT, KEEP IT)
- Check Graywater Potential for Your County!
- And Remember, No Matter How Fancy or Expensive—ALL TANKS NEED TO BE PUMPED!

WANTED: SEPTIC KILLERS!

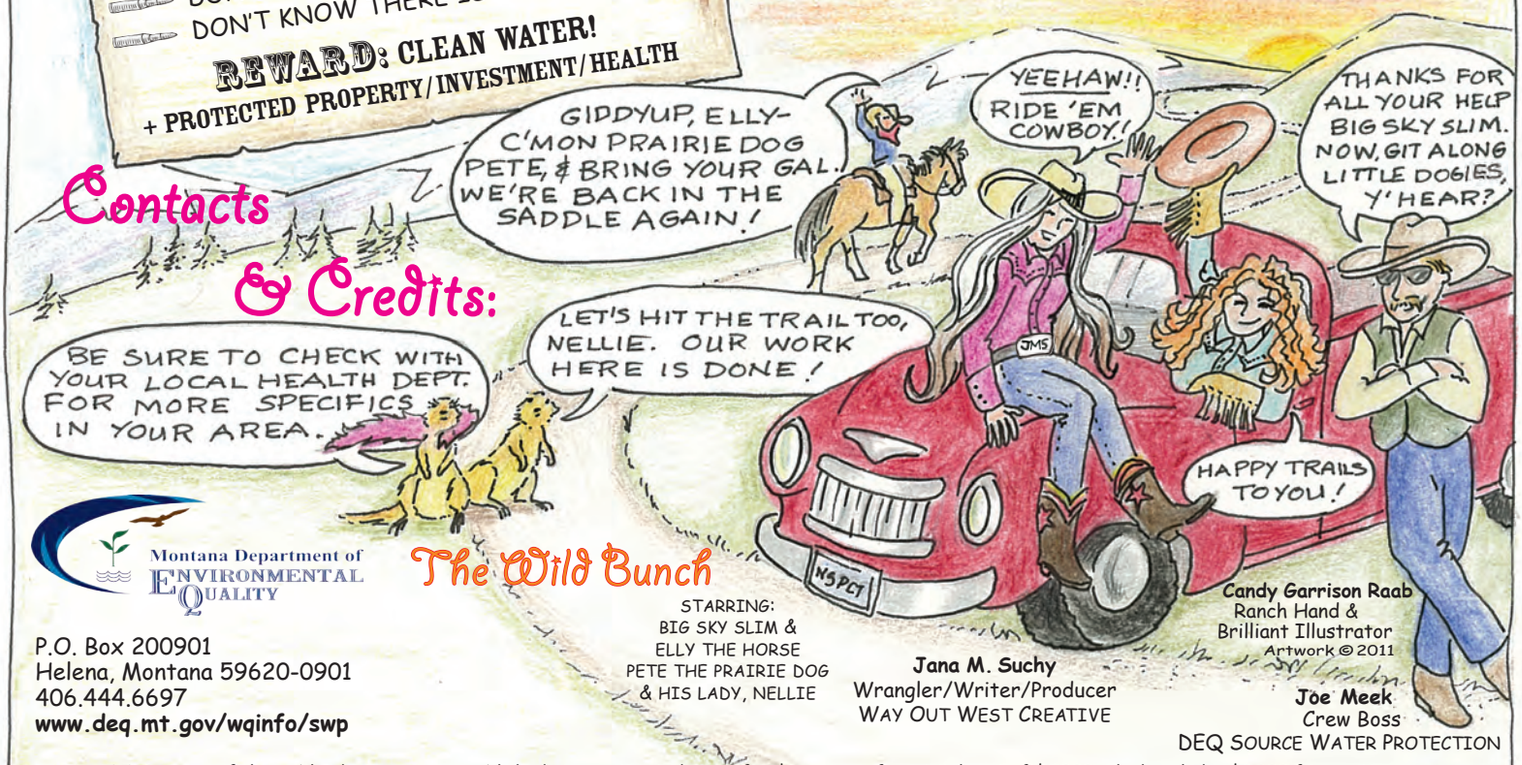
ALIAS

ARMED & EXTREMELY DANGEROUS

- TANK NEEDS PUMPING
- HIGH WATER USE
- FLUSHING TRASH
- LACK OF MAINTENANCE
- TOO MUCH GARBAGE DISPOSAL
- OVERLOADED WITH SOLIDS
- KITCHEN GREASE & TOXIC CHEMICALS (+ water-softener salts)
- DRIVING OVER DRAINFIELD
- TREE ROOTS; POOR DRAINAGE
- POOR INSTALLATION, DESIGN, SITING (unfit soils, steep slopes, small lot)
- DON'T KNOW WHERE SEPTIC IS
- DON'T KNOW THERE IS A SEPTIC!

REWARD: CLEAN WATER!

+ PROTECTED PROPERTY/INVESTMENT/HEALTH



Contacts & Credits:

The Wild Bunch

STARRING:
BIG SKY SLIM &
ELLY THE HORSE
PETE THE PRAIRIE DOG
& HIS LADY, NELLIE

Jana M. Suchy
Wrangler/Writer/Producer
WAY OUT WEST CREATIVE

Candy Garrison Raab
Ranch Hand &
Brilliant Illustrator
Artwork © 2011

Joe Meek
Crew Boss
DEQ SOURCE WATER PROTECTION

Montana Department of ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

P.O. Box 200901
Helena, Montana 59620-0901
406.444.6697
www.deq.mt.gov/wqinfo/swp

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