

# Septics Edition

First Flush, "tIssue" #8

Summer 2011

## Simplify your life later by installing "Access Risers" now

Basic septic system maintenance involves looking into your septic tank's inlet and outlet openings (and the pump chamber if you have one), and risers provide easy access. The steps below outline how to install access risers for simpler maintenance and repair. **For detailed instructions please use the internet link listed below.**

### 1. Locate your tank

Get a copy of your "as-built" drawing (see box below), a shovel, a probing tool, eye protection, and gloves. Using the probing tool, gently poke around the area of the septic tank until you hit concrete. Septic tanks may be buried 6" to 5' below ground. **Warning: Underground power or other utility pipes or cables could be near or over your septic tank, and if you hit a power line it could be deadly!**



### 2. Dig up the ground over your tank

Dig up the entire top of the tank and remove rocks and dirt around the openings. Remove the concrete lids for both the inlet and outlet openings. (You will not need the concrete lids once the risers are installed.)



**Caution:** Once the lids are off be careful around the tank. Exposure to sewage can cause serious illness, so make sure you wear gloves and eye protection, and wash up afterwards with plenty of soap and water.

### 3. Install riser and lid

Measure the depth to the top of the tank and purchase risers accordingly. You may purchase PVC risers and lids at a local plumbing supply store or from a septic tank manufacturer. Risers may be installed flush with the surface or sticking above ground by a few inches.



Clean off the top of the tank, removing all dirt and debris. Obtain a high-strength flexible concrete patch mix that hardens in 15-20 minutes. Use heavy-duty gloves when handling these products and mix a small amount at a time, according to instructions. The stuff hardens FAST! Seal the riser to the septic tank using the patch mix. You may fill gaps and finish sealing by adding Bentonite or casing sealer around the base.

Now make sure you carefully secure the riser lid with screws provided. Presto! You've got sanitary, easy-to-find access ports to your septic tank—and no more digging!



Of course, if you are unsure of doing this work yourself you may hire a professional to locate your system, install risers and lids, and perform maintenance. The EH website has a list of licensed OSS professionals.

*Riser installation instructions borrowed, in part, from Thurston County Environmental Health.*

### What if I don't have an "as-built" drawing?



An as-built is a drawing or map of your septic system components, usually drawn by the system designer. It may be attached to the septic permit, or drawn on the back of the permit, which is hopefully on file at the county. Prior to your inspection, fax your request for a copy of the as-built for your property to 417-2313. Provide the property address or parcel number, and an email address or return fax number—or use the form at the website below. Allow up to five business days for a response. If there is no as-built on record or you can't locate the tank yourself, there are septic maintenance companies or "locating" companies listed in the phone book that can find it for you – and perhaps dig it up to spare your back!

Unfortunately, your drainfield may be even harder to find. Look for an area that looks greener than the surrounding area, or looks like it is striped. If the area stays green in late summer and fall then it could indicate the location of your drainfield.

### Did you know?

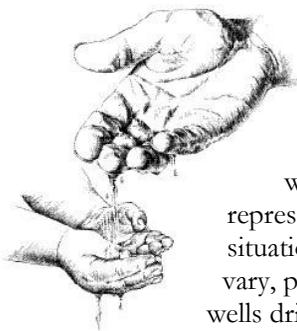
...a leaky toilet or fixture in your house can flood out your septic system and cause premature failure?

Replacing a flapper (or a toilet) is much less expensive than replacing a drainfield!



### Clallam County Onsite Program Websites

- Onsite septic systems (OSS) in general: <http://www.clallam.net/HHS/EnvironmentalHealth/onsite.html>
- Lists of OSS professionals in Clallam Co.: [http://www.clallam.net/HHS/EnvironmentalHealth/onsite\\_professionals.html](http://www.clallam.net/HHS/EnvironmentalHealth/onsite_professionals.html)
- To order a copy of an "as-built" drawing: [http://www.clallam.net/HHS/documents/asbuiltrequestno\\_fee.pdf](http://www.clallam.net/HHS/documents/asbuiltrequestno_fee.pdf)
- How to install risers (details): [http://www.clallam.net/HHS/EnvironmentalHealth/onsite\\_om.html](http://www.clallam.net/HHS/EnvironmentalHealth/onsite_om.html)

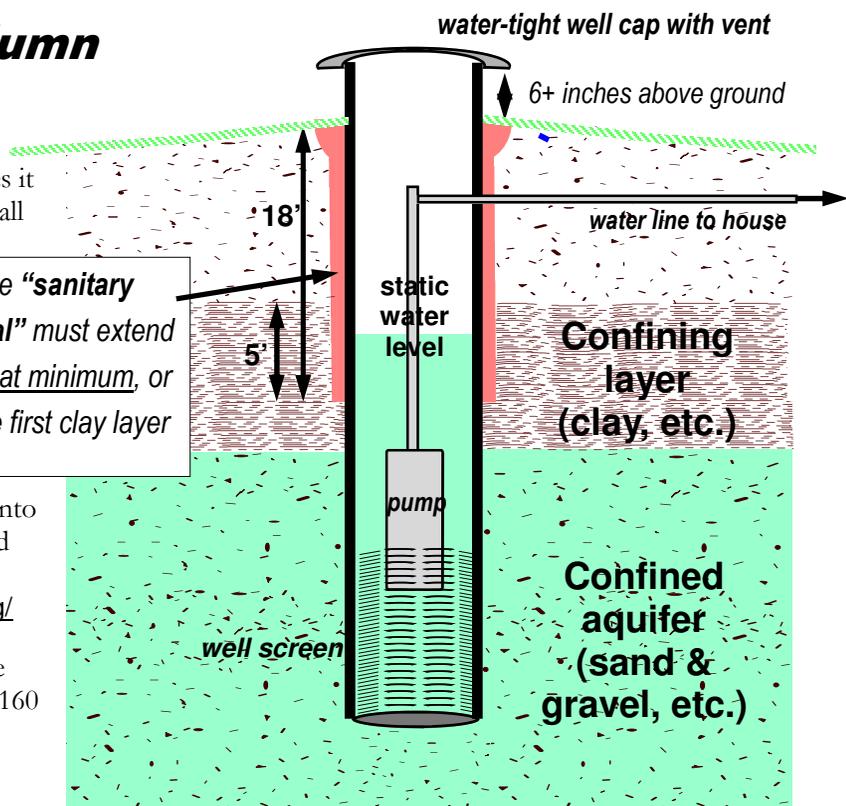


## The Water Column

This diagram of a modern cased and screened drinking water well is not to scale, nor does it represent appropriate construction for all situations. Requirements vary, particularly for wells drilled in bedrock or for monitoring purposes.

However, a **sanitary surface seal of at least 18'** is required for every well regardless of its purpose, and should be noted on the driller's log. The seal keeps shallow groundwater and flood water from getting into the well, protecting your drinking water. Contact a licensed well driller for specific requirements under WAC 173-160. Well logs may be found at: <http://apps.ecy.wa.gov/welllog/>

Any well which is "abandoned" (no longer in use) must be decommissioned according to state guidelines (WAC 173-160-415 through -465). However, if you are interested in offering your unused well for research purposes, contact Clallam County Environmental Health at 360-417-2424.



Bentonite "sanitary surface seal" must extend 18 ft. down at minimum, or 5 ft. into the first clay layer

### Clean Water Herald—Septics Edition Summer 2011

**Clallam County Environmental Health Services**  
223 E. 4th Street, Suite 14  
Port Angeles, WA 98362

PRSR STD  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Olympic Mailing  
Services



The address used is the taxing address on record in the Clallam County Assessor's Office for one or more properties that are (or are likely, according to land use information) utilizing an onsite septic system.

Puget Sound  
Starts Here



# SUMMER CALENDAR

The Clean Water Herald is a periodic newsletter sponsored by members of the Clean Water Work Group, to inform and promote good stewardship of our shared natural resources.

The "**Septics Edition**" series will be published quarterly through 2011 by the friendly staff at Environmental Health Services, a division of the Clallam County Health & Human Services Department.

Contact us at the courthouse, 360-417-2258, or visit [www.clallam.net/envhealth](http://www.clallam.net/envhealth).

Major funding for the **Septics Edition** is provided by the Centennial Clean Water Fund through a grant from Washington Department of Ecology.

Printed on 30% post-consumer content recycled paper.

### Septics 101 Online

A 30-minute video and quiz are now available through the link below. When you've completed the course and quiz, print and save your Certificate of Completion.

*There are no in-person Septics 101 classes scheduled at this time.*

Take Septics 101 online at

[http://www.clallam.net/HHS/EnvironmentalHealth/onsite\\_septic101.html](http://www.clallam.net/HHS/EnvironmentalHealth/onsite_septic101.html)

### Septics 201 *Planned release in late 2011*

Also known as **Do-It-Yourself (DIY) inspection training**. This class will, pending pilot test results, train the homeowner how to perform a certified inspection of their septic system.