



Septics Edition

First Flush, "tIssue" #2

Late Fall 2009

Wow!

The first issue of "Septics Edition" was mailed to more than 16,000 septic system owners in Clallam County, and more than 400 of you called immediately to sign up and learn more.

EH thanks you for your patience as we develop a program to train hundreds of septic system owners over the next few years to conduct their own inspections. This issue is devoted to answering many of the questions we heard.

In case you missed the last newsletter, two recent state laws substantially affect rural homeownership by making septic system inspections a periodic requirement that will be tracked by Clallam County Environmental Health ("EH").

The County was awarded grant funds from the Washington Department of Ecology to test a pilot project that teaches homeowners to inspect their own septic system. Because it is a pilot, only a limited number of people can take this "DIY" training. It is a test to determine what kind of training works best, and also to assess the use of web-based inspection reporting. We will provide more information about the project in a future issue of "Septics Edition."

Answers to Your Questions about TRAINING

How do I get trained to inspect my own system?

Clallam County has received funding to offer a limited number of homeowner do-it-yourself (DIY) inspection training classes with "Septics 101" as a pre-requisite. The DIY inspection training is a pilot project under development and no classes are currently scheduled, so watch for updates in future issues of this newsletter.

When can I take Septics 101?

Due to the overwhelming response from the last newsletter, all Septics 101 classes paid for by grant funding are now full. We currently are looking for funding and at other options that will allow us to provide additional Septics 101 classes this coming summer and fall. Watch for updates in the next newsletter.

Will training be held in the West End?

There are two Septics 101 classes scheduled in Forks in spring 2010. Once more funding is available we shall hold classes in Clallam Bay/Seki, hopefully during the summer of 2010.

I already took Septics 101. Do I have to take it again before the DIY training?

Homeowners who have taken Septics 101 do not have to take the class again but will be asked when they took the class so the county can verify attendance.

Am I required to take any training?

There is no requirement for training unless you want to become certified to perform septic inspections yourself. In that case, DIY training is required and Septics 101 is a pre-requisite. All septic system owners are *encouraged* to attend a Septics 101 class to learn basic information about how systems work and what to look for to prevent failure and avoid added expense.

Will the training for DIY inspections be the same for conventional gravity systems and those with pumps?

DIY training programs will be tailored to the type of septic system to be inspected. The training for a conventional system will be simpler than training to inspect a system with a pump (and specialized types may require certification from the manufacturer).

Answers to Your Questions about INSPECTION REGULATIONS

When do the new septic system inspection requirements take effect?

The new State regulations took effect on July 1, 2007. Clallam County code was revised in 2008 to incorporate the new requirements as well as recommendations from citizens and industry in the On-site Septic System Management Plan. However, Clallam County actively will not enforce the inspection requirement until there is adequate capacity in the County's Environmental Health Division and the septic system industry to meet this new demand for service. EH is working with both the industry and other jurisdictions in the region to build capacity for needed services. The inspection requirements will be enforced in phases over the next few years.

Are homeowners allowed to inspect their own septic system?

Homeowners are allowed to perform their own inspections if the following conditions are met:

- after they have completed county-approved training;
- if EH has an as-built drawing on file for the septic system; and
- within the Marine Recovery Area (see other side), after the **first** inspection has been done professionally.

Who can I hire to inspect my system?

At this time, Clallam County allows professionals including state-licensed septic system designers, professional engineers experienced in OSS technology, and certified sewage system maintenance providers to perform regular inspections of residential, community, and commercial septic systems as well as inspections at the time of property transfer. A list of local professionals that qualify may be found on our website <http://www.clallam.net/HHS/EnvironmentalHealth/>. Note that professional inspections always are required for commercial septic systems, or when a building permit or food service permit approval is needed.

What happens if the County does not have a septic system record for my property?

The homeowner will be required to have the first inspection conducted by a professional if EH does not have an as-built drawing of the system, which is included on most permits and sanitary surveys (or if they're within the MRA—see other side).

I am selling my home. Does the County require that I get the septic system inspected?

The State sewage code requires that a seller provide to the buyer all maintenance records and a completed disclosure statement in accordance with Chapter 64.06 RCW. By June 2010, Clallam County will require that a record of a recent professional OSS inspection (no greater than one year since the inspection was performed) be included as part of the disclosure documents.

How will the County track inspection records?

EH maintains a database for these records and is currently developing a system for internet submittal.



The Water Column

The “Marine Recovery Area,” Septics, and Shellfish

A Marine Recovery Area (MRA) is a management area established to protect especially sensitive marine waters from pollution from poorly functioning or failing septic systems. A 2006 state law required Puget Sound Counties to designate MRAs where shellfish growing areas are closed (or if closure is likely), or where bacteria or nitrogen are seriously affecting water quality.

Why was an MRA formed?

The MRA in eastern Clallam County was established because parts of Dungeness Bay are currently closed for commercial and recreational shellfish gathering, and there are bacterial pollution problems in some of the streams that empty into the Bay and the Strait of Juan de Fuca. Human waste, most likely from poorly functioning or failing septic systems, is contributing to these problems according to recent research that identified bacterial sources. The Sequim-Dungeness Clean Water District was created by Clallam County in 2001 partly to address issues such as insufficient monitoring of septic systems. Because of this link the MRA was located to essentially coincide with the Clean Water District.

Where is it exactly?

The MRA encompasses the Dungeness Watershed, those waters influenced by it through the irrigation system, and other independent tributaries to the Strait of Juan de Fuca. It extends from Bagley Creek east to and including the Sequim Bay Watershed and Miller Peninsula, and from the Strait south to the county line.

How does living in the MRA affect septic system management?

Septic system owners in the MRA must have their first (or a recent) inspection performed by a professional. After the initial inspection, homeowners who have received proper training will be allowed to inspect their own system if they so choose (more details on other side).



Clean Water Herald—Septics Edition

Late Fall 2009

Clallam County Environmental Health Services

223 E. 4th Street, Suite 14
Port Angeles, WA 98362



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 helpful 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

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Due to overwhelming response, registration for our Septics 101 class is closed until further notice.

Stay tuned by checking

www.clallam.net/HHS/EnvironmentalHealth/onsite.html

Class	Date	Time	Location
Septics 101	Jan. 11	1:30-3:00 pm	County Courthouse Room 160
Septics 101	Jan. 19	6-8:30 pm	Dungeness River Audubon Center
Septics 101	Feb. 2	6-8:30 pm	Dungeness River Audubon Center
Septics 101	Feb. 18	6-8:00 pm	Dungeness River Audubon Center
Septics 101	March 2	5-7:30 pm	DNR Building, Forks 411 Tillicum Lane
Septics 101	March 11	6-8:30 pm	County Courthouse Room 160