

Septics Edition

First Flush, "tIssue" #3

Spring 2010

D.I.Y. Septic Inspection Training — Clean Water is the Goal

Double wow! Clallam County Environmental Health continues to receive a tremendous response to our newsletters, and especially to the homeowner Do It Yourself (DIY) septic system inspection training. As most of you have heard, we are beginning to develop the DIY inspection training for septic system owners this year in response to the Washington State Department of Health new inspection requirements. If you haven't heard, there are requirements for homeowners to have their onsite septic systems inspected on a regular basis. See our website (address below) for previous newsletters regarding details of the new requirements.

There has been a great deal of interest in being one of the first to be trained with our DIY inspection program. It is not clear whether people are motivated to "do the right thing," are avid "do-it-yourselfers," or simply want to save money. What is evident is that the new regulations have caused a great deal of anxiety about how and when they will be enforced, so here are some facts about that.

The law is already in effect and applies to all septic system owners. Clallam County Environmental Health (EH) is required by law to enforce these regulations. However, no firm deadline has been set because we need to have adequate notification and

educational programs in place for the inspection program to work. EH will need to show the state Department of Health by 2012 that we are making steady progress in implementing our inspection program. In other words, we are not knocking on doors yet, but we will be within a couple years.

This does not mean you should sit back and wait until 2012 to

have your system inspected! Regular inspection and maintenance can prevent premature failure of your septic system and save you thousands of dollars in repair costs. Just because your toilet flushes today does not mean everything is fine with your septic system. Imagine getting to the point of not being able to flush. Without regular inspection and maintenance that is a very real scenario! Those of you who have already had that experience know – it's not a pleasant situation to be in. Be pro-active and get your system checked. If you do not have the money right now, be aware that unmaintained septic systems do fail and cost even more money to repair.

For those of you interested in Septics 101, there has been confusion about whether taking this class meets your training requirement for conducting your own inspections. Septics 101 is a pre-requisite to the DIY

training, not the DIY training itself. EH will hold two more Septics 101 classes this spring to help meet the high demand. See back for the spring schedule (also on the website address listed below).

Septics 101 Class

- Covers the general basics of how onsite septic systems (OSS) function, and their proper care.
- Is recommended for all septic system owners! Classroom participants receive a packet with a copy of their OSS "as-built" diagram on file with EH. **See back of newsletter for new classes offered.**
- Will be a pre-requisite for taking DIY inspection training in the future.

D.I.Y. Septic Inspection Training

- Is currently under development as a **pilot training project** — to be tested in 2011.
- Will be specific to different OSS designs (conventional, pressurized, mound, etc.)
- Will certify participants to conduct official inspections of their own OSS.
- May have training modules available online.
- May have costs associated with the class.



Know what this is? If you've taken "Septics 101" you do! Called a "D-box," it distributes liquid from the septic tank into multiple drainfield lines. This one has a riser (large cylinder) to allow easy access for maintenance. Trees and shrubs with deep roots can wreak havoc in there!



Typical conventional-type drainfield just before it is covered with topsoil. After it's out of sight, it's out of mind — but don't forget — **never drive or park or irrigate** over this precious investment!

Website Addresses for the Clallam County Onsite Program

Onsite septic systems in general:
Past "Septics Edition" newsletters:
"Septics 101" class information:

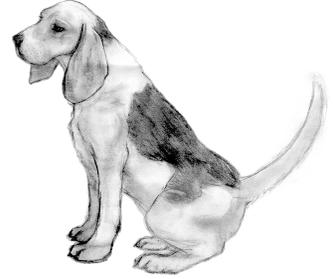
<http://www.clallam.net/HHS/EnvironmentalHealth/onsite.html>
<http://www.clallam.net/HHS/EnvironmentalHealth/ehnewsletter1.html>
http://www.clallam.net/HHS/EnvironmentalHealth/onsite_septic101.html



The Water Column: PET WASTE IS RAW SEWAGE

Scoop the poop, bag it, and throw it in the trash!

Dog and cat waste is more than just an icky nuisance. It's a health risk to animals and people, especially children. It's full of bacteria that can make people sick. And it's a source of water pollution. When it rains, pet waste melts away and runoff carries it to storm drains, ditches and streams that feed our rivers, lakes and shorelines. Collecting your dog and cat waste and putting it in the garbage means the pollution will be contained in a landfill that is monitored. Many people already place their pet waste in the trash because it's convenient. Some hide it in the trash can because they think it's prohibited. Don't worry! It's allowed. If you already put it in the trash, keep up the good work!



Can I flush our dog or cat waste down the toilet?

If you're getting this newsletter you must have a septic system, so the short answer is **NO!** Several elements not normally found in human waste can interfere with septic system functions and clog the drainfield. (Note that people served by city sewer may be allowed to flush pet waste, but it's best to check with the sewer provider to be sure.)

Can I bury or compost pet waste?

Composting, burial, and "natural decomposition" are not good strategies. They may seem practical, but these methods do not kill hazardous pathogens in the waste that can pollute water and make people very sick. As mentioned above, landfills are designed to safely handle dog waste, cat litter, and dirty diapers. Yards are not.

- Burying or leaving that much poop on the ground is not much different than a neighborhood full of broken septic systems.
- Composting is unlikely to kill hazardous pathogens because most home compost piles don't reach a high enough temperature.
- Placing pet waste in yard-waste collection bins for curbside pickup is also a bad idea. Even commercial yard waste processors do not usually compost at temperatures high enough to kill some disease-causing organisms found in pet waste.

[This information compiled from Ecology publications and Snohomish County's Surface Water Management web pages.]

Clean Water Herald—Septics Edition

Spring 2010

Clallam County Environmental Health Services

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Puget Sound
Starts Here



SPRING 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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Septics 101	Thursday March 11	6-8:30 pm FULL	County Courthouse Room 160
Septics 101	Tuesday March 23	6-8:00 pm FULL	Tongue River Audubon Center
Septics 101	Tuesday April 6	5-7:30 pm	DNR Building, Forks 411 Tillicum Lane
Septics 101	Thursday April 22	6-8:30 pm FULL	County Courthouse Room 160
Septics 101	Thursday May 6	6-8:00 pm	County Courthouse Room 160
Septics 101	Tuesday June 29	6-8:00 pm	County Courthouse Room 160