

Septics Edition

Second Flush (MRA only), "tIssue" #3

Fall 2012



Tools used by one homeowner to inspect their onsite septic system after becoming certified through the County Do-It-Yourself (D.I.Y.) inspection training course.

Get Dirty to Do Some Good

Last summer, over 100 of your neighbors got their hands (in gloves) dirty during the pilot Do-It-Yourself homeowner septic system inspection training. The program was developed by Environmental Health to provide additional options for homeowners to comply with septic system inspection requirements.

Pilot D.I.Y. program participants registered on the program website, watched the training video, and completed the exam to become certified. They then arranged with Environmental Health or a certified septic system inspector (Operation and Maintenance Specialist) to observe them conducting their first inspection. Field guides and checklists specific to all major septic designs were developed to guide the homeowner step-by-step. Upon completion, participants submitted an inspection report and a short survey about the project via the website.

108 people participated in the D.I.Y. pilot project. Here are a few common responses we heard:

- ✓ The video is a good educational tool;
- ✓ Homeowners learned how to successfully inspect their own septic system;
- ✓ They liked the ability to learn the methods online.

It became evident over the course of the program that homeowners also benefitted from having an experienced professional on hand for the first inspection.

The importance of regularly inspecting systems became very clear:

- ✓ about 60% of the systems inspected had at least one deficiency or something that needed to be corrected;
- ✓ half of those had 2 or more deficiencies;
- ✓ 3 systems were found to be on the verge of failure, but were able to be fixed.

Note that all participants had taken "Septics 101" in past years but, until they had the additional training and hands-on experience, they had not known they had real problems.

Environmental Health hopes to have the D.I.Y. program (also known as "Septics 201") available online soon, pending issues regarding funding, website updates and a video host site. We would like to offer in-person inspection training as well. Watch for details in upcoming newsletters.



Remember, landowners in the Clallam County Marine Recovery Area (see box on left) must have their first—or a recent—inspection conducted by a professional. After that, D.I.Y. works for us if it works for you!

Did you know

...there are around 12,000 septic systems in the Clallam County MRA?

We'd prefer to be precise, but not everyone has a permit so we can't be certain. Number of septic systems in the MRA:

11,408 known, 563 assumed

Number of routine inspections conducted in the MRA:

781 in 2012 (to date)

Clallam County Onsite Program Websites

Find as-builts and other permit records:
 Onsite septic systems (OSS) in general:
 O&M program; inspection requirements:
 OSS educational page:
 Septics Edition newsletter (all issues):

http://websrv2.clallam.net/tm_bin/tmw_cmd.pl?tmw_cmd=QueryForm&tmw_query=Parcel
<http://www.clallam.net/HHS/EnvironmentalHealth/onsite.html>
http://www.clallam.net/HHS/EnvironmentalHealth/onsite_om.html
http://www.clallam.net/HHS/EnvironmentalHealth/onsite_septic101.html
<http://www.clallam.net/HHS/EnvironmentalHealth/ehnewsletter1.html>

COMING SOON
 Clallam County received a grant to update the "Septics 101" online training video. The new video was filmed this summer and currently is being edited. Look for this exciting video (exciting to us, at least) to be online soon!



The Water Column

Local Water Quality Ambassador

Do you or a friend own a small business that generates hazardous waste in Clallam County? If so, you have an ally in protecting water quality. Belinda Pero, Environmental Health Specialist, offers free technical assistance to small businesses to review hazardous waste storage and disposal practices as well as ways to prevent runoff that could pollute streams and groundwater. The practice is dubbed ‘source control’—referring to sources of pollution—and applies whether or not you operate under state permit requirements. You could be a dentist trying to dispose properly of toxic mercury, dry cleaner keeping chemicals from going down the drain, auto body shop not sure where to get rid of leftover solvents, or a boat yard, or print shop...

Enter Belinda, also known as the “Local Source Control” specialist. Her mission is not to discipline your company—in fact, she doesn’t have that authority. Instead, she educates owners and managers about pollution regulations and permits, advises on pollution prevention measures, and conducts technical assistance visits.

If you are interested in scheduling a source control visit for your small business in Clallam County, please contact Belinda by calling 360-417-2334.

If Belinda looks familiar, her other job is Clallam County Environmental Health Water Lab Manager!
http://www.clallam.net/HHS/EnvironmentalHealth/water_testing.html



Belinda Pero, the friendly face of pollution prevention for small businesses in Clallam County. She is holding a Spill Kit available to small business owners.

Clean Water Herald—Septics Edition

Fall 2012

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



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.

Septic Repair Loans
FALL SPECIAL!
 Reduced rates from **Craft3**
 ~ See inside for details ~

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

“**Septics Edition**” Volume 2 (Second Flush) is published 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

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Fall Septics Events

Septics 101 <u>Online</u>	A 30-minute video and quiz are available through the link below. When you’ve completed the course and quiz, print and save your Certificate of Completion.		
<p><i>Take Septics 101 <u>online</u> or register for in-person classes at</i> http://www.clallam.net/HHS/EnvironmentalHealth/onsite_septic101.html (if you don’t have internet, register by leaving a message at 360-417-2529)</p>			
Septics 101 <u>In-Person</u>	Nov. 8	6:00 - 8:30pm	Dungeness River Audubon Center; west end of Hendrickson Rd., Sequim
Septics 201 <u>Depends on Funding</u>	Also known as Do-It-Yourself (DIY) inspection training—not yet available . This class will train the homeowner how to perform a certified inspection of their septic system.		

Frequently Asked Questions on...

Septic System Inspections

The Washington State code regulating onsite septic systems requires all systems to be inspected on a regular basis. Conventional gravity systems must be inspected at least every **three** years; others **every** year.
(246-272A WAC)

My septic system is working fine. Why do I have to have it inspected?

From the surface a septic system may appear to be working just fine, but it can be impacting the environment in a variety of ways. Careful inspection of the system increases the chance that small problems will be discovered before they become BIG problems, and can then be fixed before they get much worse. Besides being law (see box), regular inspection of a septic system should lead to a longer life for the system, which saves money and protects the environment.

What will the County do if I don't have my system inspected?

Clallam County is currently educating homeowners on the regulations and the importance of regular inspections, and is committed to working with homeowners rather than against them in protecting their home investment and complying with the law. Administrative penalties or fines for non-compliance are under consideration.

Can I inspect my own system?

For properties located in the Marine Recovery Area (see newsletter page 1), the County must have a record of a professional inspection completed within the past 3 years, and a record drawing of the system location before a homeowner can inspect their own system. The County hopes to have the Do-It-Yourself homeowner inspection program available soon. You will need to take the required training to become certified to inspect your own system. More information, including a list of licensed maintenance providers is on the County website:

<http://www.clallam.net/HHS/EnvironmentalHealth/OSSInspectionRequirements.html>

What septic system upgrades are required by the County?

Some upgrades are recommended, such as risers on the septic tank to facilitate future inspections or outlet filters to help prevent solids from entering the drainfield. If the inspection is done for the purpose of a building permit or other government action, or if the system is found to be failing, installing risers will be required and other upgrades may be required.

How much does an inspection cost?

The cost of an inspection is determined by the O&M provider, not the County, and will vary depending on the size, complexity and accessibility of your system. There is currently no fee to submit an inspection report to the County unless it is required for the sale of a home, a building permit or similar governmental action.

What happens if the inspection reveals that something is wrong with my septic system?

Minor problems such as a broken baffle or tilted d-box can be fixed at the time of an inspection and don't require a repair permit. If the tank is found to be leaking or if the system is failing, you will need a repair permit—contact a certified septic system designer to guide you through the process. The “Craft3 Septic Loan Program” is specifically for financial assistance with septic system repairs for properties in the MRA—see newsletter page 3.

Does my tank need to be pumped every time it is inspected?

No. The inspection will determine if your tank needs to be pumped. In general, the tank will need to be pumped when the solid content equals 1/3 of the tank volume; when the scum and sludge layers exceed 6 and 12 inches, respectively; or for other reasons noted by your inspector. You may contact Clallam County Environmental Health Division for further information.

Do I need to be present for the inspection?

It is strongly recommended you be present during the inspection because you can learn a lot!

Are other counties doing the same thing?

Yes. The counties bordering the Strait and Puget Sound are implementing similar programs to enforce the state regulations and other counties are moving forward with adopting the requirements.

More questions?

A video version of the popular “Septics 101” class (and other useful information) is available online at:

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

Many handouts and brochures are available in our offices:
Environmental Health Division
County Courthouse, room 130
360-417-2332, EnviroHealth@co.clallam.wa.us



Opening the concrete lid to a septic tank. Many people install a “riser” to simplify this step! “How to install a riser” was a feature of our Summer 2011 newsletter, available in our office or online at: <http://www.clallam.net/HHS/EnvironmentalHealth/ehnewsletter1.html>

Craft3 Septic System Repair Loans

Fall Special!

New, lower rates and fees:

Apply by December 31, 2012 and sign loan documents by February 28, 2013 for this special rate!

Craft3 offers an affordable loan that covers 100% of the costs of designing, permitting, installing, and maintaining a septic system. **Craft3** also makes maintaining your system easy by making additional funds available for operations and maintenance. The **Craft3** Septic Loan is available to residential property owners. They offer competitive loan terms, with customer-friendly qualification criteria.

You can securely apply online, or by mail. Complete the [loan application online](#), [download an application](#), or receive a copy by mail. We are also available to discuss your needs and answer any questions. Contact **Craft3** at craft3septic@craft3.org or 360-642-4265 ext. 151. <http://www.craft3.org/borrow/septicloans>

As of the end of September, the **Craft3** Septic Loan has

- assisted over 343 property owners;
- treated 41 million gallons of waste water; and
- made over \$7.9 million in septic loans;
- protected 6,209 ft of riparian zone around Puget Sound.



**"We Monitor Streams,
and We Do It Really, Really Well."**

Back in the early days, when members of *Streamkeepers of Clallam County* were asked what they should use for a motto, they agreed that above everything else it was most important to get good data.

After all, the typical job of a Streamkeeper is to go out once each season to monitor at established sites with the stream team they have joined. Teams exist for many, but not all, streams in Clallam County. To join a team, volunteers agree to take the formal training offered each summer—but you can always join Streamkeepers in between trainings and learn to perform some of the tasks "on the job." All monitoring equipment is provided in a kit from the office.

Some Streamkeepers also elect to perform cleanups and small-scale restoration projects on their streams. Others may choose to help with office work in support of the program, perform statistical data analysis, serve on a variety of citizen watershed advisory boards, or reach out to the community about watershed health and the work of Streamkeepers.

**New volunteers
always welcome!!**



Kids love getting their hands dirty... and getting to use all the cool meters, gages, probes, and sampling equipment necessary to collect basic data on stream conditions that is meaningful into the future.



Volunteers monitor water quality as well as stream flow, salmon habitat conditions, stream bugs, invasive weeds, erosion, and other factors that indicate overall stream health.

The purpose of the Streamkeepers program is to involve residents in caring for watersheds by monitoring local streams, providing useful data that can help guide management decisions, and fostering watershed stewardship. The program is supported by the Clallam County Road Department, and housed in the courthouse basement. Ed Chadd, program coordinator for over 10 years, says "come join the fun!"

Joking aside, around **100,000 hours** have been logged by 100+ Streamkeeper volunteers over the past decade! Their data has proved to be not just credible but invaluable to dozens of researchers, water quality managers, fish and wildlife biologists, land use planners, and others who integrate actual conditions into their decision-making.

Check out the **Streamkeepers'** website for more information, including videos that feature their good work:

<http://www.clallam.net/SK/>

Or call **360-417-2281** for direct access to the place where it all happens—Ed Chadd's desk!