

Clallam County Environmental Health Services
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**SEPTIC SYSTEM CARE
 BEGINS WITH YOU**

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POSTAL CUSTOMER

Clean Water Herald Septics Edition

Clallam County Environmental Health

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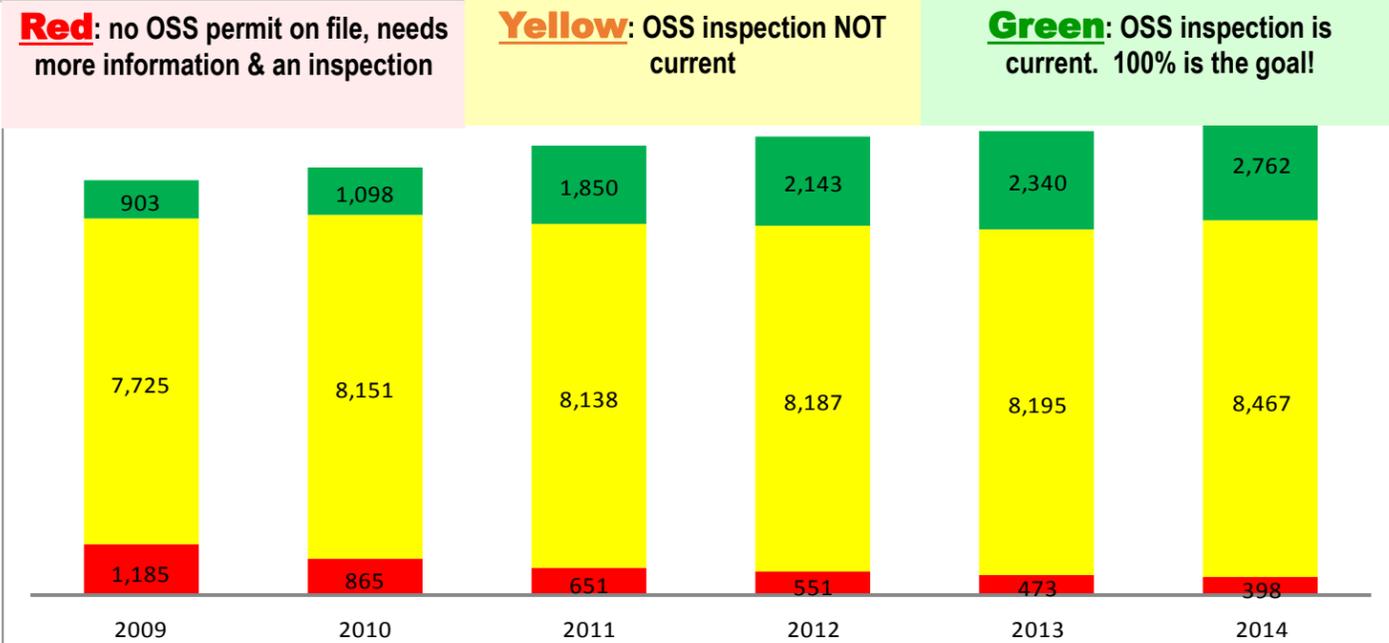
Marine Recovery Area Onsite Septic System

Inspection Status: 2014 Update

We're getting Greener! Clallam County Environmental Health (EH) is on track to receive more routine septic system inspections in 2014 than any year previously. Over 300 homeowners are now registered in our Septics 201 DIY database to inspect their own septic systems with 77 DIY inspections submitted so far in 2014. So if your septic system is due for an inspection, keep on Santa's "nice" list and have it inspected before the holidays!

So why still so much Yellow? While the total number of septic system inspections in Clallam County continues to grow, Onsite Septic Systems (OSS) are not being inspected often enough to stay current in the green section on the chart below. The number of new systems is also growing. Inspection of newer systems is important to catch mistakes or unexpected changes in conditions after installation. State law requires homeowners to maintain the function of their septic system and the best way to accomplish that is through regularly scheduled inspections and maintenance. Don't wait for your septic system to have problems to get an inspection or else it might already be too late to save the system and yourself from a costly repair. Remember **STAY GREEN** and don't let your green status change to yellow! Have your septic system inspected every 3 years for gravity systems and annually for all other types of pressurized systems. Visit www.clallam.net/Septics201DIY to find out if your system is eligible for Do-It-Yourself Homeowner inspection, so you can keep it green in our database with current inspections of your own.

In the Red? Not anymore! Database improvements, records research, public outreach, site visits and incentive programs have all helped to drastically reduce the number of unverified septic systems in the MRA. Accounting for all septic systems is a high priority and we are proud of how much lower those numbers are today.



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 3, Fall 2014 is published by the friendly staff at Environmental Health Services, a section of the Clallam County Health & Human Services Department. Contact us at the courthouse, 360-417-2506, or visit our website at www.clallam.net/Septic.

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Web Page Short Cuts

Septics 101 <i>Online</i>	General information about Septic systems, a required prerequisite for Septics 201 DIY training www.clallam.net/Septics101
Septics 201 <i>Online</i>	Do-It-Yourself (DIY) inspection training video & certification available online at www.clallam.net/Septics201DIY
Online Permit System	Clallam County Online Permit System to find permit records & when your septic system is due for inspection www.clallam.net/Permits/index.html
Onsite Septic System Main Page	Clallam County Environmental Health's Onsite Program links to Septic related information www.clallam.net/Septic
Summary of Inspection Requirements	Information on Septic system inspection requirements & when systems are eligible for DIY www.clallam.net/Septic

Why Inspect? Why Not Just Pump your Septic System?

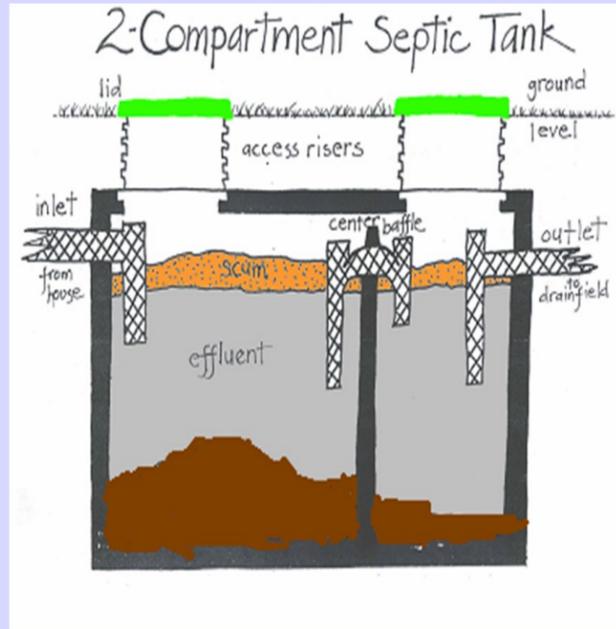
Environmental Health staff is often asked “Why does my septic system need an inspection? It is working just fine.”

As part of a grant funded pilot project in 2011, EH staff worked with homeowners to audit their DIY septic system inspections. 108 septic systems were inspected, including conventional gravity, pressure, mounds, and sand filter systems. Out of the 108 systems inspected, 61 percent required some sort of maintenance. Many systems had more than one item that needed to be fixed—27 had leaking or broken risers; 24 needed pumping; 6 had pump problems; 6 had clogged outlet filters, 2 of which had created severe backups in the line; and 3 required immediate maintenance to prevent failure. And all of the homeowners thought their system was working “just fine”. Problems with septic system are not always obvious so regular inspections are important.

“So why can’t I just pump my tank instead of having it inspected?”

It can take a few months for a septic tank to obtain a healthy optimum balance that can be maintained for years; pumping when it’s not necessary can upset that balance. If the scum and sludge levels are not excessive, there is no reason to fix what isn’t broken—no reason to pump. A septic system inspection can help you determine if pumping is necessary. In addition, a full septic inspection will let you know the status of all the components of your system, (risers, pump chamber, pump, alarm, baffles, electrical panel, distribution boxes, drainfield, monitoring ports and cleanouts) not just the tank.

Not convinced? A septic inspection may find small problems before they become big, costly ones; saves you money spent for unnecessary maintenance; and is usually less costly than pumping alone. Don’t assume your system is working fine – know that it is!



Is your Septic Tank on Drugs?



Have you ever thought about the effect of medications on septic systems and groundwater? High concentrations of antibiotics, chemotherapy drugs and even radiation treatment can kill the bacteria in a septic tank, just like it does in the human body. The bacteria in the

septic tank are necessary for a properly functioning tank. If the bacteria are destroyed, solids will accumulate much faster and could cause drainfield problems and groundwater contamination.

Since the human body cannot completely metabolize medications, it is inevitable that medications will enter the septic system through body waste. So if you expect to be taking medications long term or having chemotherapy or radiation treatments, there are some activities you can do to help protect your septic system:

- Always dispose of leftover medications properly; never flush them down the toilet. Some pharmacists will dispose of unused medications for you.
- Have the septic tank inspected at least every 6 months during treatment, and pump it, if necessary.
- Have your septic tank pumped once the medical treatment is complete. Tell the pumper you had medical treatment so the tank can be thoroughly cleaned when it is pumped.
- Install an effluent filter and clean it frequently, every 3-6 months. This will keep solids and hair from entering the drainfield.
- Have the entire system inspected by a professional on a regular basis and contact a professional or EH if you have questions.



The Water Column—Dungeness Water Exchange

As a result of the Dungeness Instream Flow Rule (WAC 173-518) that became effective January 2, 2013, new water users in the Rule area are required to “mitigate” or offset the impact of their water use on area streams and senior water rights. The Rule area covers the Dungeness Watershed, including most of the Marine Recovery Area (MRA). According to the WA Department of Ecology, the non-profit **Dungeness Water Exchange** was established to assist new water users to purchase mitigation to offset their water usage. In addition to purchasing mitigation, Ecology requires all new wells be metered and has specific guidelines on the meter type to be purchased and installed.

Mitigation packages can be purchased from the **Dungeness Water Exchange** for new indoor and outdoor water uses. Some parts of the Rule area such as south of the irrigation ditches can only purchase mitigation for indoor uses. Fees are one time only and must be paid prior to a building permit being issued. WA Department of Ecology is currently reimbursing the \$1,000 fee for domestic, indoor use.

In addition, the mitigation fee structure for stockwater for livestock such as cows, donkeys, goats, horses, llamas, pigs, and sheep is also available. Rates are dependent upon the number of animals.

Domestic Water Use	Fee
Indoor Use	\$1,000
Outdoor Use (50 by 50 ft area)	\$1,000
Outdoor Use (75 by 75 ft area)	\$2,000

Upon payment of the mitigation fee, the property owner receives a **Mitigation Certificate**, which stays with the land and documents that a specific parcel has paid for the right to use water. The mitigation certificate **must** be recorded with the Clallam County Auditor. For commercial or industrial water needs that do not have access to existing water supplies and require mitigation, a mitigation fee will need to be negotiated with the Dungeness Water Exchange.



For further information contact Amanda Cronin of the Dungeness Water Exchange at 206-675-1585 ext. 100 or Mike Gallagher of Ecology at 360-407-6058.

REGISTER ONLINE NOW FOR SEPTICS 201 DIY HOMEOWNER INSPECTION CERTIFICATION

To find out if your system is eligible for DIY inspection, visit www.clallam.net/Septics201DIY

Remember:
OSS in the MRA must have a professional inspection within the last 3 years on file before a system will be eligible for DIY Inspection.

Do-It-Yourself Septic System Inspection Program
Developed by Clallam County Environmental Health Division

Welcome to Clallam County's Homeowner Septic Inspection Program Homepage.

DIY Website Instructions | Department of Health Homeowner Education Page | Septic Safety Tips | Watch Septics 101 Online | Frequently Asked Questions

Clallam County homeowners must first register below as a New User to take the test and become Certified by the Septics 201 DIY Program or login as a Registered User to access the training materials and submit inspection reports online.

NEW USERS
Verify System Eligibility & Register

REGISTERED USER LOGIN
User ID (e.g. 12345678) Password
[SOM] [] [Log In]
e.g. SOM2009-50001
Forgot my Password or User ID.

Please visit the [FAQ](#) or [onsite septic program page](#) for more information.

Need a Septic Repair Loan? Help is available.

For eligibility contact **Craft3 Clean Water Loans** at www.craft3.org/Borrow/SepticLoans

or **USDA Rural Development** at www.rurdev.usda.gov/WA-Home.html

