

# Your Septic System

## "Your Own Private Sewage Treatment Plant"

A septic system is a very effective technology to manage human waste if properly maintained. Systems that are not maintained can fail, causing public health problems. Failing septic systems can contaminate groundwater and pollute surface waters such as rivers, lakes and streams as well as nearshore shellfish growing areas.

Inspecting your septic system on a regular basis can prevent septic system failures. Preventing septic system failure can preserve and enhance water quality and keep shellfish areas and drinking water sources safe from contamination. A well-maintained septic system can save homeowners money by preventing costly repairs.

### CONVENTIONAL GRAVITY SEPTIC SYSTEMS

A conventional or gravity system has three working parts:

- septic tank
- drainfield & its replacement area
- surrounding soil

A septic tank is designed to function as a storage and pre-treatment component for the wastewater. It normally is a large concrete tank that is buried in the ground. A drainfield is either made of perforated pipes buried in trenches filled with gravel or utilizes gravel-less chambers.

As wastewater flows into the septic tank, solid material settles out and the remaining liquid flows by gravity to the drainfield. Microbes in the soil digest or remove most contaminants from the wastewater before it eventually reaches groundwater.

### PRESSURIZED ALTERNATIVE SEPTIC SYSTEMS

Sometimes soil and site conditions require that a pressurized or alternative septic system be used. These systems are more complex than conventional systems and typically require a pump for their operation. Common pressurized alternative systems include:

- pressurized distribution
- sand filter & sand-lined drainfield trench
  - aerobic treatment unit
  - mound system

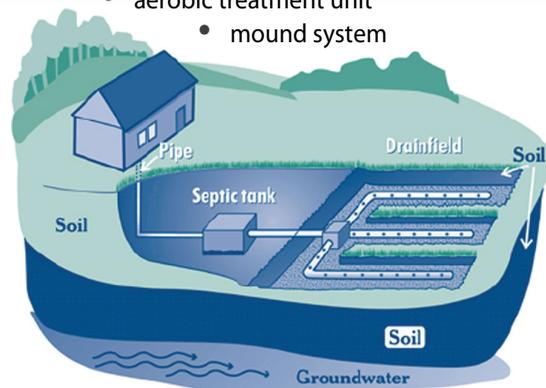
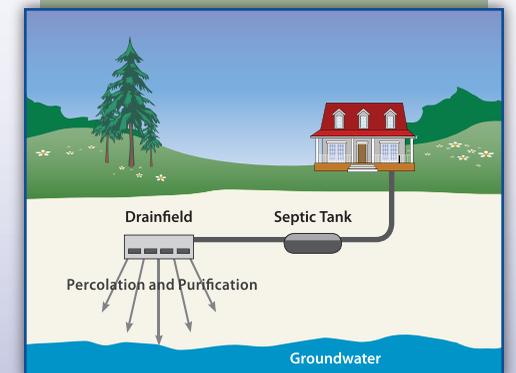


Diagram from U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

# Septic System Inspection Requirements



Clallam County Health & Human Services  
Environmental Health Services  
111 East 3rd Street  
Port Angeles, WA 98362

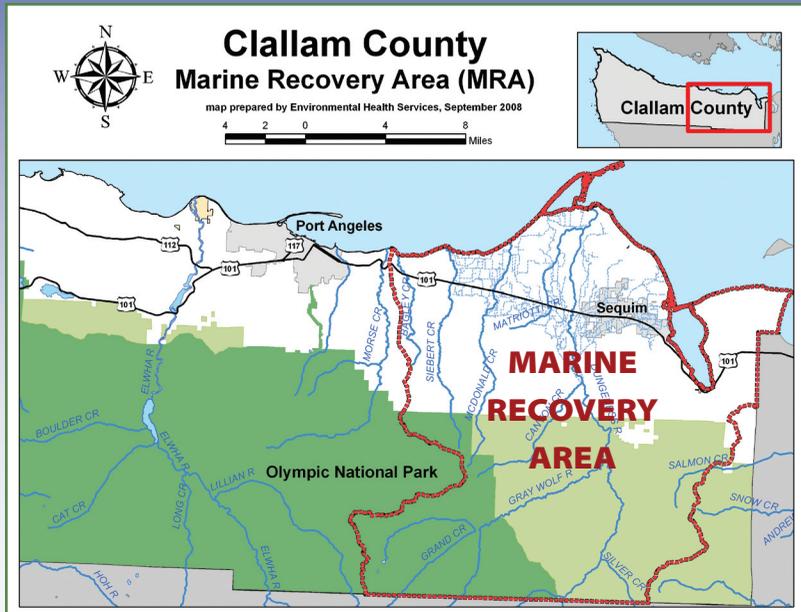


Call Clallam County  
Environmental Health

360-417-2506  
[www.clallam.net/septic](http://www.clallam.net/septic)

# State Septic System Requirements

# What Do I Need To Do?



## CONVENTIONAL GRAVITY SEPTIC SYSTEMS

*Must be inspected at least once every three years.*

## PRESSURIZED ALTERNATIVE SEPTIC SYSTEMS

(those with pumps)

*Must be inspected EVERY year.*

The Marine Recovery Area (MRA) extends from the Bagley Creek Watershed east to, and including, the Sequim Bay Watershed and the Miller Peninsula, and from the Strait of Juan de Fuca south to the county line.

## STATE LAWS AND CLALLAM COUNTY REQUIREMENTS

Washington State On-site Septic Regulation (WAC 246-272A) requires **all septic system owners** to have their systems evaluated regularly to ensure that they are functioning properly. This law went into effect in July of 2007.

Septic system owners must obtain a complete evaluation of their system's components to determine functionality, maintenance needs, and compliance with septic system regulations and permits. Septic system owners must submit inspection records to the County within 30 days of the inspection. Septic system owners are responsible for all repairs deemed necessary by the inspections and all necessary maintenance.

## MARINE RECOVERY AREA

Another Washington State law required Clallam County to establish a Marine Recovery Area for areas where poorly functioning or failing septic systems pose a risk to public health and water quality. Marine Recovery Areas are typically designated where shellfish growing areas are threatened or downgraded and areas where bacteria or nitrogen are affecting water quality.

The Marine Recovery Area is located in eastern Clallam County. It encompasses both the Dungeness Bay and Sequim Bay Watersheds and extends westward to include the Bagley Creek Watershed (see map). 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 bays.

- 1 Hire a professional to inspect your septic system.
- 2 Do it yourself, visit [www.clallam.net/septic](http://www.clallam.net/septic) to learn more.

## PROFESSIONAL INSPECTION

Septic system designers and septic system maintenance providers may perform the required inspections. Designers must be licensed by Washington State, and maintenance providers must be licensed by Clallam County. Visit [www.clallam.net/septic](http://www.clallam.net/septic).

## HOMEOWNER DO-IT-YOURSELF

Homeowner do-it-yourself septic system inspection training and reporting is a key component of Clallam County's strategy to have all septic systems in the county working properly.

Homeowners in Clallam County qualify to inspect their own septic systems if these conditions are met:

- 1) Clallam County has an existing locate record 'as-built' drawing of the septic system.
- 2) The system type is eligible for DIY inspection.
- 3) The septic system owner has successfully completed Septics 101 & 201 training classes.

When the County has no records for a homeowner's septic system, the homeowner will be required to get a professional inspection before they can begin conducting their own inspections.

Septic system owners who live within the Marine Recovery Area **MUST** have their systems first inspection done by a professional, even if there is a septic permit or other record on file. After the initial professional inspection, certified homeowners may inspect their own systems.

Contact Clallam County Environmental Health Services at 360-417-2506 or visit [www.clallam.net/septic](http://www.clallam.net/septic) for more information.

## SPECIAL CASES

There are special inspection requirements for certain types of septic systems, community systems, food service establishments and other commercial properties, property transfers and governmental actions like building permits, change of use or lot alterations.

Contact Clallam County Environmental Health for more details.

## BENEFITS OF REGULAR INSPECTIONS

Beyond the legal requirement, it makes good sense to regularly inspect your septic system. Regular inspection helps:

- Protect your property investment,
- Save you money by preventing failures,
- Provide safe drinking water for your family and community, and
- Keep shellfish and recreation areas safe from contamination.

Be a responsible septic system owner.

*Remember, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.*

## RESOURCES

Clallam County Onsite Septic Program - <http://www.clallam.net/septic>

Washington State Department of Health Wastewater Management Program <https://www.doh.wa.gov/CommunityandEnvironment/WastewaterManagement>