

# Jefferson County Public Health Performance Measures

## 2012 Year End Report

### ON-SITE SEWAGE (OSS) AND SEPTIC OPERATIONS & MONITORING (O&M) PROGRAMS

**MISSION:** The mission of the Onsite Sewage Program is to minimize the threat of surface and ground water contamination from failing or improperly designed, installed or maintained onsite sewage systems. The mission of the Operation and Monitoring Program is to protect public health by ensuring onsite sewage systems are monitored, identify failures, and items that may lead to costly premature failures of OSS that contaminate ground and surface waters.

**GOALS FOR FY 2012:**

1. Educate homeowners, builders, real estate personnel, banks, installers, designers and onsite system maintenance personnel in the proper operation and maintenance of onsite sewage systems.
2. Assure a high quality-onsite sewage system monitoring program.
3. Implement and enforce state and local rules and regulations governing the installation and use of onsite sewage systems.
4. Investigate action requests and complaints in a timely manner to reduce the threat of human contact with untreated wastewater.
5. Complete all state funded grant activities on-time and on-budget.
6. Assure high quality customer service.
7. Establish a Homeowner Inspection Program to comply with monitoring requirements under WAC 246-272A.

**OBJECTIVES FOR FY 2012:**

1. Develop written informational materials for public distribution and conduct workshops for community groups addressing onsite sewage system operation and maintenance.
2. Provide training to community groups to increase awareness of regulatory requirements for onsite sewage systems.
3. Review monitoring and inspection reports and provide timely follow up and coordinate with online submittal program data.
4. Identify previously unknown onsite sewage systems.
5. Utilize existing data systems to track action requests and complaints.
6. Update Local Management Plan to reflect progress and necessary changes.
7. Assure communication with applicants regarding the status of onsite sewage permit applications.

**PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012 Projected	2012 Final
Number of systems repaired/upgraded	32	32	37	31	38	43
Percent of system failures less than 5 years in use	0	0	0	0	0	0
Number of complaints received	42	43	52	36	50	20
Number of complaints closed*	24	19	33	25	32	26
Number of septic permit applications submitted <sup>1</sup>	231	169	158	118	120	147
Number of evaluations of existing system (EES)	295	255	463	469	300	511
Percent of existing systems receiving regular 3 <sup>rd</sup> party monitoring. <sup>2</sup>	2.20%	1.80%	3.40%	3.40%	2.80%	3.80%
# of previously unknown systems having a monitoring inspection	15	9	10+ 59 <sup>3</sup>	15+ 85 <sup>5</sup>	35	14+93 <sup>5</sup>
Percent of monitoring inspections resulting in some maintenance needed.	29%	28%	56% <sup>4</sup>	68% <sup>4</sup>	29%	59% <sup>4</sup>
Percent of monitoring inspections resulting in required significant maintenance or repair.	12.5	16%	18.70%	12.40%	15%	18.50 %
Percent of failures/major maintenance	<2%	<2%	<2%	<2%	<2%	<2%
Number of educational workshops	6	5	19	4	15	9
Number of workshop participants	239	102	355	156	250	220

\*The number of Closed complaints can be greater than Received because cases from previous years may have been closed during the current year.

<sup>1</sup>Number of applications does not equal approved permits

<sup>2</sup>Based on estimated 13,500 systems in the County (from the Local Sewage Management Plan)

<sup>3</sup>Number of workshops includes 5 Septics 101 classes and 4 public workshops on proposed code revisions and homeowner inspection authorization program.

<sup>4</sup>Includes inspections where the only maintenance item identified was that the tank needed to be pumped. Previous years did not include this maintenance item.

<sup>5</sup>14 systems were identified and observed via regular monitoring inspections, 93 systems were identified (and had some level of observation) via sanitary surveys and are sites where no previous records exist.

## **SUMMARY OF KEY FUNDING/SERVICE ISSUES**

Tracking will be done with existing data systems to evaluate effectiveness of permitting and monitoring programs. Ongoing O&M activities will be funded through permit and inspections fees as well as the newly formed Clean Water District and state and federal grants. Implementation will focus on developing and implementing a system to allow homeowners to be trained, complete monitoring inspections and report results to meet state requirements for assurance that OSS systems are functioning properly. Follow-up with homeowners on inspection results is critical to the understanding of how systems work and why maintenance and proper operation is important. A system for correspondence and follow-up is under development. We will conduct community outreach to increase awareness of the new requirements. An incentive program to assist homeowners in completing inspections and install access risers and monitoring ports is in development for implementation in 2012-2013.

Identification of previously unknown onsite sewage systems is ongoing as part of a project in the Marine Recovery Area (MRA) along the Hood Canal.

Onsite sewage permitting and staffing has declined due to the economic downturn of the past several years. In 2012 there was an approximate 25% increase in permitting workload. The corresponding increase in revenue has not yet allowed the program to add staff. As a result, existing staff have become more efficient in their work where possible but permit turnaround time has been negatively affected. The team continues to strive to maintain effective communication with our clients and partners (other state and local departments) to effectively manage workload and requests for information while diligently reviewing and enforcing county code and policies.

## **2012 STUDY/ANALYSIS OF RESULTS**

- Revisions to the Onsite Sewage Code, JC 8.15, were adopted in May 2012 after an extensive and thorough process that included a Work Group made up of homeowners, industry professionals and other interested parties. The groups meetings and public workshops were professionally facilitated. Code sections were written and revised by staff based on the group's recommendations. New sections include a program to enable most homeowners to complete most of the required monitoring inspections. The requirements for homeowners to become authorized to complete inspections includes completing 2 classes – one on the basics of septic system operations, maintenance and monitoring, the second is the process of completing an inspection and submitting a report to the county.
- Based on information available at the time of the code revisions we anticipated that the classes would be available in August and we would begin sending Inspection reminders in September. Unfortunately the classes are not yet available to us online. The State Department of Health will be hosting the videos and they expect them to be ready early in 2013, March or April.

- We provided ‘in person’ Septics 101 classes in September and October in 5 locations around east JC to 120 homeowners. All classes include information on funding available for repair or upgrade of an OSS and are very well received.
- The incentive/rebate program for access risers for your first monitoring inspection by a professional began in late 2012. This will assist homeowners of previously unknown systems as well as many older systems that have never been inspected.
- Inspection reminders will start to go out as soon as Septics 201 is available.
- We did not succeed in identifying all unknown onsite sewage systems by the end of the year. Work will continue toward this goal into next year with a project in the lower Duckabush and the Hood Canal Watershed project. Sanitary Surveys help us to identify that a system is on a property but do not generally include a detailed inspection of the system. These systems are tracked separately from systems that have a regular monitoring inspection completed.
- Monitoring Inspection Reports are reviewed. Follow-up letters were sent to 65 property owners where problems/deficiencies are noted that indicate either imminent failure or identify a violation of the permit. Responses to these letters have been excellent and offer an opportunity to give additional information to new property owners.
- The Local Management Plan is being reviewed and updated to identify successes and update information. This project will be completed in 2013.
- The Onsite Sewage, Solid Waste and Water Quality Divisions worked on Standard Operating Procedures around enforcement and investigation of complaints and identified problems. These are substantially completed. The Onsite Sewage Division is working on the procedures for all regular practices: permit review and issuance, data entry and reporting, and tracking monitoring inspections and response to necessary corrections.
- The number of permits received is slightly above 2010 and 2011 numbers (25% increases from 2011). We currently have one FTE carrying primary responsibility for all septic permit applications. A sustained increase in the permit load will necessitate reallocating staff to maintain timeliness in permit review and issuance.
- Response to complaints and identification of problems is coordinated with Water Quality staff. We are working to develop better systems for communication and documentation in the database to assure that all staff can see and understand what the status is on a particular site.