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## PUBLIC HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT

June 18, 2015

Don Sloma, MPH  
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Health Officer

Dear Septic System Professionals,

This notification is to inform you about a change in the On-Site Sewage System Application process and to provide you with information from Thurston County Resource Stewardship Department regarding field reviews and the 2015 Mazama gopher screening process.

### **Environmental Health Information**

- The On-Site Sewage System Application has been updated. If your project is located within an urban growth area or city jurisdiction, you will now be responsible to obtain approval and comment from the city prior to submitting your application to Thurston County. Any application submitted after July 31, 2015 without city approval will be deemed incomplete and will not be accepted across the Permit Assistance Center (PAC) counter. For questions regarding this process, please contact Debra Baker at [bakerd@co.thurston.wa.us](mailto:bakerd@co.thurston.wa.us).

### **Resource Stewardship Information**

- To aid staff conducting field reviews, flag corners of the proposed building envelope. You will receive a flag packet when your application is processed, or you can use your own flagging. For more information, contact Vince McDowell at [mcdowev@co.thurston.wa.us](mailto:mcdowev@co.thurston.wa.us).
- For 2015, Thurston County adopted a gopher review process recommended by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. You may recall that the USFWS listed the Mazama pocket gopher as 'Threatened' under the Endangered Species Act in May of last year. The county conducted more than 400 on-site gopher reviews last year, and of those, 90 percent of the applicants received building permits. This year's process differs from last year's. Please read the details of the 2015 process on the county's website at [www.co.thurston.wa.us/permitting/gopher-reviews](http://www.co.thurston.wa.us/permitting/gopher-reviews), but briefly:
  - When you apply for a building or development permit, the county will do an in-office review to determine if your site requires a gopher review.
  - Exclusions: West of the Black River, Steamboat Island Peninsula, sites submerged 30 days in a row since 10/2014, impervious surfaces, steep slopes & vested properties (although the county doesn't require another review for vested properties, the USFWS does. The county can help you connect with USFWS to arrange the site visits). The [federal 4D exclusions](#) also apply.
  - Two-visit requirement: low-preference soils that are more than 600 feet from a known gopher site. The two visits must be 30 days apart.
  - Three-visit requirement for: low-preferences soils within 600 feet of a gopher site; medium and high preference soils. The three visits must be 30 days apart with the final visit in September or October.

## Septic Professionals Update

June 18, 2015

Page Two

- USFWS is requiring the multiple visits because visible evidence of gopher presence is easier to detect from June to October, and gophers are most active in September and October.
- Find soil type details on the last page of the USFWS letter to Thurston County.  
(<http://www.co.thurston.wa.us/permitting/gopher-reviews/docs/usfws-guidance-letter.pdf>)
- Frequently asked questions can be found on the county's website at  
<http://www.co.thurston.wa.us/permitting/gopher-reviews/docs/faq-2015-gopher-review-process.pdf>

For questions regarding the Mazama pocket gopher, soil disturbing activities, or the status of review/screening, please contact Andrew Deffobis at [deffoba@co.thurston.wa.us](mailto:deffoba@co.thurston.wa.us) or 360-754-3355 ext. 5467.