

OSS Management Plan

Notes from the November 7, 2013 Meeting

Attendance:

Facilitator-Linda Hofstad

Environmental Health Director-Art Starry

Steve Petersen

Sue Davis

Cissy Fontenot

Diane Utter (for Andy Haub)

Roger Max

Tris Carlson

Absent: Dan Smith, Adam Frank, Evan Cusack, JR Inman and Erica Marbet

Paul Morneau

Greg Moe

Max Buldis

Lynn Schneider

Joshua Daily

Dennis McVey

Linda Hofstad called the meeting to order at 3pm.

Members introduced themselves and indicated whom they represent.

Draft Plan:

Our intent is to update the current Thurston County OSS Management plan. The update will include the 7 elements that are in the current plan. The goal is to have a draft ready by late spring.

- Electronic Database Enhancement
- Identification of Sensitive Areas and Marine Recovery Areas
- Education
- Quality Assurance and Enforcement
- Funding Strategy
- Performance Measurement
- Implementation Strategy

Communication:

- Agendas and Meeting Notes will be emailed unless members notify Cissy differently.
- Agendas and meeting materials will be sent no later than the Friday before the meeting.
- Meeting notes will be sent no later than one week after the meeting.
- Meeting notes will try to capture significant discussion points and any decisions from the meeting. They will not have the level of detail of minutes or transcripts.

Please note: **Wi-Fi is unavailable in our Lilly Road building**

Web Page:

- The link to the management plan webpage is: http://www.co.thurston.wa.us/health/ehadm/OSS_imp.html, and
- The committee web page is: <http://www.co.thurston.wa.us/health/ehomp/involve.html>
- The webpage will list the committee member's names, agendas, meeting notes, meeting documents and links to relevant state regulations and planning documents.
- Note: The webpage is still 'in production'.

Ground Rules for future meetings:

- Begin and end meetings on time
- Allow speaking without interruption
- Respect others' opinions
- Come prepared

- Keep whom you represent informed

Meeting schedule:

- **December 5th, 4 – 6 pm**
Summary of the Operation and Maintenance program in Thurston County
- **January 9th, 3-5 pm**
Sensitive areas
- **February 6th, 3-5 pm**
Sensitive areas
- **March 6th, 3-5 pm**
Begin discussion of funding
- **April 3rd, 3-5 pm**
Septic to Sewer and Urban Issues
- **May 1st, 3-5pm**
Begin review of a draft plan

Meetings will be in room Conference Room 107 unless otherwise specified.

Committee materials:

All committee members were given a notebook with the following:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| • Committee member list | • On-site Sewage Systems Chapter 246-272A WAC |
| • Meeting dates | • RCW 70.05.190 |
| • Meeting agenda | • Senate Bill 6116 |
| • Status report of 2008 OSS Management Plan Recommendations | • Article IV of the Thurston County Sanitary Code |
| • RCW: 70.118A | |

Staff will print meeting materials and have them available for each meeting.

Staff will identify relevant sections of the plan or regulations pertinent to the next discussion so committee members can review them in advance. These will be identified on the meeting agenda.

PLAN AND REGULATION BACKGROUND:

Art provided a brief overview of attitudes and perceptions regarding on-site sewage systems (OSS), how they have changed over time, and why we are required to have an management plan.

Long ago (before Art started with Thurston County in 1983)...

Most people thought OSS:

- Were appropriate for rural settings
- Were suitable as interim sewage disposal methods in small communities in suburban areas

General Assumptions...

- OSS had limited lives - maybe 20 years
- Puget Sound was big and resilient – and septic systems didn't pose much of threat to it
- Most suburban areas would eventually convert to sewer

Over time, as our region developed

- Failing septic systems were identified as significant contributors to shellfish downgrades
- Septic system pollution was linked to water quality problems with lakes in various parts of the state
- Ground water pollution was associated with septic systems
- We realized sewer wasn't coming to nearly as many areas as we thought, and that it would be pretty expensive
- Grants and funding for public works projects started to dry up
- OSS became much more complex
- We needed to figure out how to ID and prevent problems, and make OSS last

Septic System Monitoring and Maintenance

- Thurston County required O&M in various forms since 1978
- County wide program effective 9/1/90
- State wide, O&M came into focus in WAC adopted 1/1/95
- County wide O&M program repealed 6/1/99 and was replaced with system that focused on large and complex septic systems

Prior to 2005, establishment of Areas of Special Concern and special areas was largely at the discretion of local government. The formation of these areas was typically driven by shellfish downgrades and associated with the formation of shellfish protection districts.

This changed in 2005 and 2006. New state law (WAC 246-272A) and legislation (3SB 1458)

- Required Puget Sound Counties to develop local plans
- Required plans to be completed by July 1, 2007
- Required LHJs to identify Marine Recover Areas where OSS contribute to shellfish downgrades, low dissolved oxygen conditions and excessive levels of fecal coliform bacteria or nitrogen
- Required strategies to ID failing OSS by 7/1/2012
- Make OSS owner responsible for regular O&M, including "complete evaluation of the system and components and/or property to determine functionality" (WAC 246-272A-0270)

Management Plan:

Linda reviewed the current Thurston County On-Site Sewage Management Plan and the status of the recommendations within the plan. Many of the recommendations have been completed (list below). Those that have not been done will be re-evaluated using current information and discussed to formulate recommendations for the updated plan.

- Time of Transfer program has been in place since 2010.
- All pump reports are submitted electronically.
- Electronic submittal uses a web-based application called OnlineRME which interfaces with the County permit-tracking system.
- Henderson Inlet was declared a Watershed Protection Area in 2005, and in 2012 was declared a Marine Recovery Area.

- Nisqually Reach Watershed Protection Area was declared a Marine Recovery Area in 2012. Its formation was modeled after the Henderson Inlet program.
- Thurston County has a grant-funded project in Eld Inlet to conduct shoreline surveys and dye testing of septic systems in areas of declining water quality.
- Thurston County has a grant-funded project to quantify the risk posed by onsite sewage systems (OSS) to the Scatter Creek Aquifer in Southern Thurston County and predict the effect of different land use and OSS management scenarios using computer modeling.
- The county health department has a grant to establish criteria to identify areas within the north county urban growth area where existing OSS pose a risk to surface or ground water and develop a strategy to convert existing neighborhoods to sewer where needed.
- The Sensitive Areas Workgroup has not been formed.
- Environmental Health staff worked with and provided training to real estate and on-site industry professionals to make them aware of the new county regulations for the MRAs and time of transfer program.
- The enhanced 5 ½ hour training for owners of gravity, pressure distribution, mound and Glendon systems has been expanded to include owners in the Nisqually Reach MRA, but has not been expanded beyond the MRA's.
- A summary of data from Thurston County's O&M program has been compiled specifically for consideration by the advisory committee.
- Rates and charges for Henderson and Nisqually are charged via the property tax statement as allowed for shellfish protect districts. Grants are being used to augment these programs.
- Programs for the remainder of the county are funded by charging fees for services provided and grants.
- In 2012 state legislation was adopted that enables the 12 Puget Sound boards of health to contract with their county treasurer to collect charges through the property tax statement to administer and implement their OSS Management Plans.
- The Washington State Department of Health recently started the Sustainable Funding for On-site Sewage Systems project.
- Art Starry, Environmental Health Director periodically provides updates to the Board of Health.

Discussion:

- Committee members asked how the different topics and discussions would make their way into the plan. Linda suggested that the last 30 to 45 minutes of each meeting be used for discussion of the topic presented and brainstorm what the committee might recommend for updating the plan.
- The updated plan will be new document – not simply an edit of the current plan.
- When discussing financing the program, the committee will look at the recommended plan elements, their estimated cost, and how the plan elements could be financed.
- One committee member said it would be important for the county to be able to document the costs of implementing any recommendation and how those costs are associated with fees or charges.

Online RME Link: www.onlinerme.com

Next meeting: December 5th, 4 – 6 pm

Meeting adjourned at 4:58