Page | 1

OSS Management Plan Meeting Notes April 3, 2014

Attendance:

Committee Members			
Name and Affiliation	Present?	Name and Affiliation	Present?
Miranda Ries – Shellfish Grower		Dennis McVey – City of Rainier Council Member	Absent
Tris Carlson – Chair of Henderson- Nisqually Shellfish Committee	R	Greg Moe – Realtor	Ø
Evan Cusack – Designer, Installer and Maintenance Specialist	Ø	Paul Morneau – Sewage System Designer	Ŋ
Joshua Daily – Citizen Representative	Ø	Steve Petersen – Environmental Health	Absent
Sue Davis – Environmental Health	Ø	Lynn Schneider – Department of Health	Ŋ
Adam Frank – Olympia Master Builders	Absent	Dan Smith – City of Tumwater	Ŋ
JR Inman – OSS pumping and Maintenance	Ø	Art Starry – Environmental Health	Ŋ
Erica Marbet – Squaxin Tribe	Ŋ	Diane Utter – City of Olympia	Absent
Roger Max – Scatter Creek area resident			

Board Member Change:

Miranda Ries will be replacing Matt Bulldis as the Shellfish Grower Representative.

Guests:

Dave Tipton, Thurston County Environmental Health

Facilitator: Linda Hofstad Note Taker: Cissy Fontenot

Linda Hofstad called the meeting to order at 3:00 pm

Approve Meeting Notes:

Meeting notes from March 13, 2014 were approved without changes and will be posted on the website.

The meeting agenda included two presentations:

Septic Systems in Urban Areas - Presentation by Sue Davis, Senior Environmental Health Specialist for Surface Water Section

Sue discussed the Urban Septic Assessment Project: Protecting Public Health & Water Quality.

- Project is a regional septic work group of Lacey, Olympia, Tumwater and LOTT formed in 2011.
 - There are a total of 16,863 urban septic systems.

- The problem is that there are areas of high density septic systems within the urban area that are
 - o polluting ground and surface waters,
 - o causing loss of shellfish harvest area,
 - o contaminating drinking water supplies and
 - affecting water recreation activities
- Quarter acre lot sizes (or less) and multi-family dwellings generate higher volumes of sewage.
- In addition, small lots leave limited room for septic system repairs.
- Through the 1970's, septic systems in the urban area were viewed as a temporary method of sewage disposal until sanitary sewers were available. Sewers never reached these neighborhoods
- Sue showed a map highlighting 8 urban growth areas with high nitrate concentrations. (Reminder: OSS technology does not remove nitrates.)

Challenges to Conversion of Septic to Sewer

- New sewers are mostly funded by new development, not existing homes
- Conversion is costly \$30,000 per house, or more, is common •
- No incentive for neighborhoods to convert
 - Septic's fail one at a time
 - Legally can repair if sewer is more than 200 feet away.
- Septic and sewered areas are intermixed •
- No strategy in place to facilitate sewer extension into existing neighborhoods.

Regional Septic Work Group work plan for conversion of septics to sewer is as follows:

- Establish criteria for prioritizing areas
- Identify priority areas
- Develop case studies

... completed

- Identify barriers
- **Review legal and finance mechanisms** ... current work
- Develop options for conversion program
- Present findings to Elected Officials

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Work group developed criteria to identify priority areas

- Septic Density?
- Sewage volumes? •
- Within Critical Aquifer Recharge Area? •
- Soil Type?
- Water Quality Violations?
- Flood Hazard Areas?
- Within Marine Recovery Areas? •
- Legal Directives?
- Septic Age?

Final Criteria for Ground Water:

- 1. High Density Septic Systems
- 2. Very Coarse Soil
- 3. In Wellhead Protection Area

Final Criteria for Surface Water:

- 1. High Density Septic Systems
- 2. Slowly Permeable Soils
- 3. Within 100' of surface water or stormwater system

The following links are maps which Sue discussed and were used by the work group to analyze and prioritize areas:

Septic Parcel to Neighborhood Analysis: shows all urban septic parcels and sewer lines http://www.co.thurston.wa.us/health/ehomp/docs/SepticParceltoNeighborhood.pdf

Neighborhood Density Analysis: shows density of septics – darker equals more septics <u>http://www.co.thurston.wa.us/health/ehomp/docs/NeighborhoodDensityAnalysis.pdf</u>

Ground Water Risk Scores: ground water analysis using the 3 final ground water criteria listed above. The 'hotter' the color, the greater the risk. http://www.co.thurston.wa.us/health/ehomp/docs/GroundwaterRiskScores.pdf

Surface Water Risk Areas: surface water analysis using the 3 final surface water criteria listed above. The darker the brown, the greater the risk. http://www.co.thurston.wa.us/health/ehomp/docs/SurfaceWaterRisk.pdf

Urban Area Septic System Analysis: combining ground and surface water where total risk equals 5 or 6 points.

http://www.co.thurston.wa.us/health/ehomp/docs/CombinedHighRiskNeighborhoods.pdf

Discussion:

Wastewater treatment (LOTT) is better at processing wastewater then a residential septic system. The wastewater treatment plan typically reduces nitrate concentrations to 5 mg/l which reduces the amount of contaminants that reach our water resources. A septic system is unable to treat the water to that level.

A Septic Summit was held in 2011. A strategy was needed in how to address existing septic systems within urban areas of the county. Needed to identify what the problem is and how to address it. Thus the regional work group was formed.

- * Where are we now? Elected officials want a Septic Summit 2. Possibly Fall 2014.
- What has been successful in the past? Woodland Creek Estates is a neighborhood that fell into a category 5/6. Stormwater polluted with septic system effluent from the development drained into Woodland Creek. The 128 homes had septic systems had a history of failures and problems. The conversion was successful because it was paid for entirely by public funding. No resident had to pay because the county found the resources to pay for the project. It is very unlikely that similar levels of support can be pulled together for other projects.
- How were Tamoshan and Beverly Beach, who have their own wastewater treatment plants, paid for? It was so long ago that all the details are not available, but it was partly paid for by monthly fees and grants for upgrades.
- Cost Josh pointed out that it would cost a neighborhood approximately half a billion dollars of private/tax payers money to connect their neighborhood to sewer.

Dan pointed out that there is also the issue of high density and the drinking water supply. The cities have a responsibility to provide clean drinking water. There is a cost for providing clean

water. The cost is either to prevent pollution by keeping contaminants from septic systems out of water supplies, or to clean up drinking water supplies after they become contaminated. It costs either way.

- What was the source of funding for Woodland Creek sewer conversion project? Grants and staff resources provided by the county, Lacey and LOTT.
- **How many septic systems are in the category 5 and 6's?** 5400
- Capacity of LOTT? If all houses in the Urban Growth Area were connected to sewer, what would be the impact to LOTT? To connect all the systems would cost approximately 5 billion dollars. LOTT has a Facilities Plan with a target date of 2053 for complete conversion of all septics in the UGA. If this conversion were to happen today, the facilities could not handle all the homes in the UGA. LOTT knows that it will need additional capacity in 6-7 years to accommodate growth. LOTT is proposing a reclaimed water infiltration facility south of Tumwater (around 2018-2020) to expand their capacity to serve the need.

Onsite Sewage Financing and Funding Management Plans – Presentation by Art Starry, Environmental Health Division Director http://www.co.thurston.wa.us/health/ehomp/docs/OSSFundingPresentation04040414.pdf

Reviewed state law requirements and how Thurston County meets those.

- Operational certificates
- Time of property transfer ... triggers inspection and adds to inventory
- Septic tank pump reports
- Marine recovery area programs
- Grants

Thurston County 2013

- 10,000 OSS evaluated; however, 70,000 OSS in county
- \$1.46K budget 1/3 of budget money is from grants.

State Department of Health – Current work: Local Management Needs Assessment for Puget Sound Counties

- What is each county's current budget?
- How much do counties need to fully implement their OSS Management Plan?

All 12 Puget Sound Marine Counties are required to have OSS management plans. Fund in different ways:

- Clean water fee
- Stormwater fee
- Shellfish District charge
- Annual fee on property tax statement
- Grants
- Possible state funding being discussed

To fully implement Thurston County OSS Management Plan:

- An additional \$1.48K
- Would provide ...
 - Creating more marine recovery areas
 - Inspection reminders for <u>all</u> OSS owners
 - Increased education offerings throughout county
 - Improved online reporting

What to do?

- Grants are diminishing
- DOH funding is uncertain
- General fund dollars aren't available
- Programs must pay for themselves

Alternate Program Option:

- Include all OSS owners in program
- Establish baseline program with charge on property tax statement would remove costs for
 - Time of property transfer
 - o Operational certificates
 - Filing septic tank pump reports
 - Education and outreach
 - Compliance

How to structure charges?

- Everyone pays one fee of \$40 annually [calculated by program cost divided by 70,000 OSS]
- Two-tier structure where high risk (5% of OSS in county) pay \$100 per year and all others pay \$36 per year
- Examples provided that compare costs of current programs versus alternate program. Examples cover homes in MRA's, homes with Operational Certificates and homes outside of MRA that do not require operational certificate.
- Examples estimate cost for 10 years of OSS ownership

Pros:

- Equitable and fair
- Fills gaps in current program
- Sustainable
- More efficient to manage program when all are the same
- Legal

Cons:

- Looks like a tax
- Public perception are services commensurate with charges?
- Accountability

Discussion:

Elements of Whatcom County's program are being challenged as part of a petition to the Growth Management Hearings Board. The Hearings Board stated in their compliance order that "self-inspections by homeowner of their on-site septic system does not constitute adequate protection of

surface and groundwater resources in vulnerable watersheds and aquifers as required by RCW 36.70A.070(5)(c)(iv)."

Question related to 2-tier option and additional cost for dye testing. Is there any other reason to have a dye system in any area other than an MRA shoreline? Areas that are on lowland, shoreline or a bank that is close to a drainage system.

Is there ever a situation where someone might be forced to do a dye test if you feel for any reason? Yes, or possibly a different type of testing tool could be used. If a nominal fee is charged to everyone for dye testing then it would make it a good deal for those who have to have it done routinely.

Reactions ...

- Must be equitable
- Go with flat fee, and divide up amongst homeowners. All residents benefit.
- More costly to determine who pays \$36, rather than everyone paying \$40 only an extra \$4. Not worth the difference.
- How would enforcement/compliance happen? Charge a fee and the homeowner doesn't do anything, now what?
- Possibility of spot checks throughout county instead of just in MRA's
- Good step in the right direction

Is Thurston County doing the same type of tests as Mason County where they walk the shoreline smelling for sewage? TC conducts dye traces on high risk OSS within MRAs. We also do limited survey work in response to complaints or problems identified by DoH during the commercial shellfish certification process. We do not have the resources for widespread shoreline surveys or monitoring.

How does Thurston County do compliance? Thurston County performs the following compliance activities:

- Follow up on failures identified on pumper reports, operational certificate and Time of Transfer documents
- Investigating complaints
- Conducting dye traces of high risk OSS in MRAs
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Next Meeting: May 8[,] 2014 at 3:00 pm

Next meeting: review draft of the management plan recommendations. Determine if still in agreement with the recommendations made.

A request was made to begin the next meeting with reviewing the funding options as presented by Art Starry.

Meeting concluded at 5:18 pm