

Onsite Septic System Program

Clatsop County Environmental Health issues septic system permits for households that are not served by public sewer. These households depend on septic systems to treat and dispose of wastewater.

A malfunctioning septic system is a public health hazard; properly functioning septic systems treat sewage to prevent ground and surface water pollution.



Septic System Educational Videos

[Septic Systems - 101 - Overview - 20 min](#)

[Septic Systems - 201 - Inspection - 24 min](#)

[Septic Program Guides & Information](#)

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[Septic Permit Fee Schedule](#)

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Related Questions

Are there loans to replace failing septic systems?

An affordable loan program is again available for homeowners and small businesses in Oregon to repair or replace failing septic systems.

Fixing or replacing failing septic systems benefits Oregonians by protecting public health and addressing threats to water quality.

The DEQ and regional nonprofit lender Craft3 are teaming up to make Craft3's Clean Water Loans available throughout the state. The Oregon Legislature approved \$2 million for the program in the last session and Craft3 began accepting loan applications on Nov. 1.

The affordable loan program provides flexible financing for homeowners to repair or replace their failing septic system. The program is also available to many small businesses that use septic systems, such as restaurants, convenience stores, and small manufactured homes or RV parks.

Properly functioning septic systems treat sewage to minimize groundwater and surface water pollution. A malfunctioning system can cause sewage to surface onto the ground or spill into waterways, creating a health hazard and harming natural resources.

These affordable loans not only cover all eligible costs for permitting, design, and installation, but they also provide for ongoing maintenance when needed. The loans have variable low rates based on the income of the borrowers and are designed to be accessible to borrowers who may not have perfect credit.

The Oregon Legislature established the program in 2016 (ORS 454.770), and DEQ entered a partnership with Craft3 to administer these loans from 2016 to 2020. Funding for this popular program was exhausted in 2020 and Craft3 stopped taking applications for loans in Oregon in June 2020.

Before the program's pause in Oregon, Craft3 provided more than \$3.6 million in loans to 187 Oregon residents and small businesses to improve or install septic systems with previous funding from the legislature. Loan recipients were in 92 cities and 28 out of Oregon's 36 counties. Of the total loans closed, 32% of households were low income, or 80% of Area Median Income.

Can I renew, reinstate or transfer my current septic permit?

Permits expire one year after the date of issuance and may be renewed or reinstated by the original permittee one time only. They must be renewed or reinstated within one year of the expiration date of the original permit and will expire one year after the original permit expiration date.

Permits may be transferred from the original permittee to a new property owner if the transfer is completed before the original permit expires, and no changes in the permit are needed. Otherwise, a new permit is required. A transferred permit carries the same expiration date as the original permit.

Note: Fee for renewal, reinstatement, or transfer of a permit is less than that of a new permit - see the fee schedule.

How big does my property need to be to install a septic system?

Generally, if a well is located on the lot, two or more acres is needed for a standard septic system and a replacement area. If a lot is served by a community or public water system, a lot as small as 1/2 acre may be adequate. Advanced treatment septic systems may be utilized for properties under 1/2 acre with limited area.

How can I locate my septic system?

There are three ways to locate a septic system:

1. Most septic records can be accessed through [Clatsop County Webmaps here](#).
2. Instructions for accessing septic records through Web maps can be [found here](#).
3. If you are unable to locate septic records using Webmaps, please:
 - Contact the Public Health office. If an as-built drawing exists we can e-mail, fax ,or copy the appropriate plot plans.
 - Try to determine where the plumbing exits on the foundation and follow the sewage line to the tanks.
 - Contact a licensed septic pumper or installer who has the equipment necessary to help locate the system.

How do I find a licensed installer?

Clatsop County Environmental Health maintains a list of the local installers in the area [at this link](#).

How do I find out how much a septic system will cost?

After you have received an approved Site Evaluation, Construction/Installation permit or a Repair permit, you should contact a licensed installer for bids. The list of licensed septic installers [can be found here](#).

How long is a permit valid?

A Site Evaluation is valid as long as the property doesn't experience significant disturbances of the soil layers that will adversely affect system function. These activities include, but are not limited to, vehicular traffic, livestock, covering the area with concrete or asphalt, cutting/filling or other soil modification activities.

A Construction/Installation permit is valid for one year. It can be renewed for a year for a fee.

A Repair permit is also valid for 1 year. However, if there is an enforcement action driving the necessity of having a repair permit, the installation of the system should happen as soon as possible as directed by the inspector. Under special circumstances, the Repair permit can be renewed for a fee.

How long will it take to get a permit?

Generally, the turnaround time for a

Site Evaluation is 3-7 days.

Construction/Installation permit is 3-5 days.

Repair permit 3-5 days.

Please note that turnaround times may vary due to workloads and weather conditions.

How much does a permit cost?

Fees are based on the type of system that is going to be constructed. The current fee schedule can be found [here](#).

I am looking at a piece of property to buy. What kind of system will I need?

The type of septic system required is determined based on the type of soil present and depth to the water table or other restrictive barrier like a clay pan or a perched water table. You will need to meet with a licensed septic system installer to discuss your plans. Once you have determined the best plan, you will need to apply for a Site Evaluation from Clatsop County Environmental Health. The Site Evaluation process will include the excavation of test holes in the area identified by the installer and onsite inspector as meeting minimum setbacks and other necessary features. The onsite inspector will evaluate the soils and determine what type of system is prescribed under State of Oregon DEQ Onsite Wastewater Rules. You will receive a Site Evaluation Report describing septic system recommendations for the property.

I have an existing system but cannot determine what type of application I need. What are the different applications concerning existing systems?

Repair Permits are required for repairing/replacing failing septic systems that serve existing facilities.

Alteration Permits are required for altering/upgrading a septic system for an existing facility that has not failed.

Authorization Notices are required when connecting or reconnecting to an existing septic system not currently in use, adding bedrooms or additional structures, or replacing a residence with another. If the septic system is more than 10 years old an existing system evaluation may be required to be performed by a licensed septic provider.

Existing System Evaluations are completed to determine the location and size of a system and to check if the system is currently functioning properly.

I have undeveloped land and I want to install a septic system, what are my first steps?

Step One: Apply for a site evaluation. The site evaluation determines if a site is acceptable for a septic system. If the site is acceptable, the site evaluation identifies the best location, type, and size of system for the undeveloped property.

Step Two: Submit an application for a construction/installation permit. Once the application is received, the documents will be reviewed and either approved or denied within two to five business days. If approved, a construction/installation permit is issued.

Step Three: Construction/Installation permit is issued. Once you receive the permit, you may begin installation of the septic system. You are required to submit a request for final inspection after the installation is complete, but before the system is backfilled.

Step Four: After the final inspection is completed and approved, backfill the installation.

I see sewage running into the ditch or onto the beach, what can I do about that?

You can file a complaint with the Onsite Septic Program. You can remain anonymous when reporting your concern. You can contact us to report the complaint at (503) 325-9302 or by email at envhealth [at] co.clatsop.or.us

If people are living on a property without an onsite sewage system, what can I do about that?

You can file a complaint with the Onsite Septic Program. You can remain anonymous when reporting your concern. You can contact us to report the complaint at (503) 325-9302 or by email at envhealth [at] co.clatsop.or.us

What is the cost of a site evaluation?

Please visit our fee schedule to determine the cost of the permits you will need for you project.

What is the minimum capacity required for a tank and drainfield in relation to number of bedrooms?

A 1,000 gallon tank is the required minimum capacity for a home with 1-4 bedrooms. A 1,500 gallon tank is required for homes with 5 or more bedrooms. Specific septic tank capacities for commercial facilities are determined on a water use basis, generally a minimum of twice the projected daily sewage flow.

When does the "no field visit" fee apply in a permit renewal application or an authorization application?

Permit renewals, reinstatements, transfers, and authorization notices for systems that are less than five years old and that do not require alteration(s) of the septic system may not require a field visit.

Where do I get a permit?

You can either download/print the applications for a Site Evaluation, Construction/Installation permit, Alteration permit, Authorization notice, or Repair permit from this link here; or you can pick up the application for these permits at Clatsop County Environmental Health Office, located at 820 Exchange Street, Suite 100, Astoria, Oregon, 97103.

Why do I need an "authorization" and why do I need a file review, and how long does it take?

An "authorization notice" evaluates if the existing sewage disposal system is adequate for a specific use. This can include reconnecting to, changing the use of, or increasing the projected daily sewage flow of an existing septic system. Some authorization notices require a field visit. Authorization notice evaluations are usually completed in 7-10 business days.

A file review is required for additions to existing buildings, such as construction of outbuildings, swimming pools, decks, etc., to ensure the placements of these structures do not infringe on any portion of the existing septic system or the replacement area. A file review is completed within 2-5 business days after we receive a completed application.

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