Impact of septic systems in Drayton Harbor water quality

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Addressing Impact of Septic Systems in Drayton Harbor Water Quality

Jennifer Hayden - Whatcom County Health Department
Regulation History

- **2006**- RCW 70.118A passed requiring local health jurisdictions in the 12 counties bordering the Puget Sound to designate a marine recovery area.

- **2007**- Whatcom County passed local ordinance requiring OSS (On-Site Sewage Systems) inspections.

- **2008**- Local management plan adopted to facilitate administration of Operations and Maintenance (O&M) program.
Drayton Harbor Watershed With Mapped OSS

- OSS parcels within 200 feet of Shoreline Management Areas
- OSS in Drayton Harbor
Whatcom County O&M Program History

- 2007- Staff hired to administer program
- Inspections required to be completed by O&M Specialists
- Funded from septage pumper fees and O&M specialist fees
  - $35 filing fee for OSS inspection submission
  - $3/100 gallon pumping fee
Current O&M Program

- 2 full time staff
- Funding from a fee collected from property owners in Whatcom County with OSS ($19/year)
- Homeowners may perform their own inspections
- Mailings to targeted watersheds are sent out several times a year requiring an inspection
  - Homeowners have ~ 6 months to have an inspection once mailings are sent out
Current O&M Program

- Require OSS inspections
- Provide trainings
- Conduct audits of OSS inspections
- Notify property owners when OSS require maintenance
- Investigate potential OSS failures
- Perform sanitary surveys based on results of water sampling conducted by Public Works
Require OSS Inspections

Inspections can be completed by a licensed O&M specialist or the homeowner.

Homeowners must complete an in-person or online training.
Audit Homeowner Inspections

Both of these OSS were reported as “Satisfactory”

Sewage flowing into a wetland

Sewage flowing directly onto the ground
Send “Maintenance Needed” Notices to Property Owners

Overgrown drainfield

Outlet pipe not watertight
Investigate Failures Reported by O&M Specialists

Grey water ‘tank’ draining onto the ground

Sewage flowing into a roadside ditch
Perform Sanitary Surveys
Drayton Harbor
2008-2009

- > 2,000 inspections performed
- 66 Failing OSS discovered
Drayton Harbor Success Story

Failing drainfield  Replaced drainfield
Drayton Harbor
Summary of Successes

• >3,100 OSS in Drayton Harbor
• >6,700 OSS inspections performed in Drayton Harbor since 2008
• 100 failing OSS discovered due to inspections
• >40 failing OSS discovered through:
  neighbor complaints
  applications for repair permit submitted