

Taking Action to Protect Puget Sound



Sustainable Funding for On-site Sewage Systems



Project goal

Research and recommend two new funding programs in the Puget Sound region for on-site sewage systems (septic systems). The funding programs will provide:

- A unified, self-sustaining, low-interest loan program to help property owners repair or replace septic systems; and
- A dedicated funding source to help local health jurisdictions (LHJs) work with property owners to ensure proper use and care of their systems.

Sustainable solutions are vital...

For Puget Sound

- Properly functioning septic systems adequately protect ground and surface waters from contamination.
- There are more than 500,000 septic systems in the Puget Sound area.

For Homeowners

- Homeowners bear the cost of septic systems and their upkeep. Routine maintenance can cost hundreds of dollars, component repairs can cost thousands, and major repairs or full system replacements can cost tens of thousands.
- Many homeowners don't know how to properly care for and maintain their systems. Some systems are not properly functioning. Pollutants from failing systems can and do find their way to Puget Sound.
- Increased emphasis on system care has increased owner demand for affordable financing for system repairs.

For Local Health Jurisdictions

- State law requires Puget Sound LHJs to develop and carry out Management Programs for septic systems. LHJs work with property owners to ensure their systems are regularly inspected and are properly used and maintained.
- Many Puget Sound LHJs are struggling to meet the law's requirements. Management Programs are complicated and costly to implement and need reliable, dedicated funding.

Septic systems make sense!

Properly constructed and maintained, they:

- Effectively treat sewage on properties not served by sewers
- Are energy efficient
- Are water-cycle friendly

Sustainable solutions for septic systems will:

- Allow flexibility in property development
- Establish affordable infrastructure

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Sustainable Funding *for* On-site Sewage Systems



Project design:

The project involves partner agencies and an advisory committee comprised of community and government leaders for high-level policy direction. It addresses two priority actions of the 2012/2013 Puget Sound Action Agenda, and includes tasks to:

- Assess the financial needs of the septic system loan program and local health management programs;
- Research optional funding mechanisms/sources;
- Explore optional program structures and select a preferred approach for each program; and
- Develop recommendations to successfully establish the funding programs. (Recommendations for funding programs may require consideration and action by the state legislature.)

Project Partners

Advisory Committee:

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