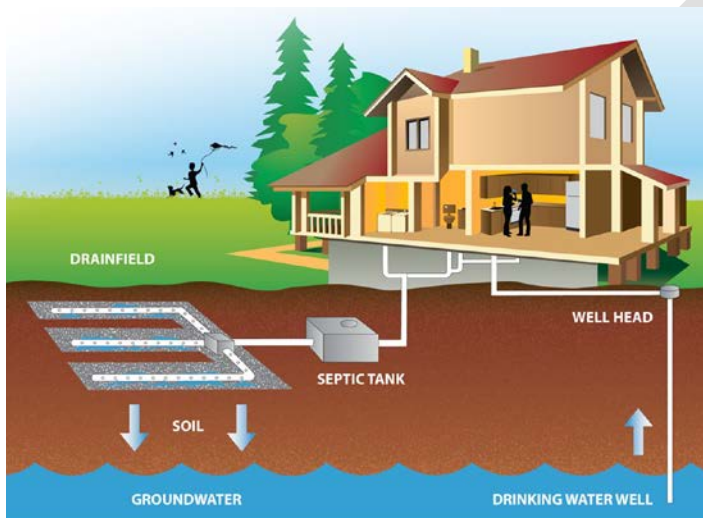


Septic System Resources for Homeowners

Failing septic systems are a large contributor to poor water quality in Puget Sound and can make shellfish unsafe to harvest. This list of resources is to help septic system owners identify and correct problems to protect both human health and our environment.

Basic Septic System Care

Basic septic system care is pretty easy. It saves you money, keeps you and your neighbors healthy, and protects the water quality and your property value! The graphic below provides a look into what's going on below the surface. Check out the following Septic System Tips and contact your local County Health Department with any questions.



COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENTS

For more information about on-site sewage systems contact your county health department:

Thurston County

Website: [Link](#)
Phone: 360-867-2673
Email: enhealth@co.thurston.wa.us

Tacoma-Pierce County

Website: [Link](#)
Phone: (253) 798-6470
Email: ehsepticssystems@tpchd.org

Mason County

Website: [Link](#)
Phone: 360-427-9670 ext. 400
Email: <http://www.co.mason.wa.us/questions.php>

1. Know where your septic tank and drain field are!
2. Inspect your system at least once a year. Check out [this video](#) by the Washington Department of Health.
3. Pump your tank when needed, usually every 3-5 years. The average cost ranges from \$200-\$400. For more information on where to find Septic Pumpers and questions to ask them, see the [DOH website](#).
4. Use water efficiently to reduce the amount of wastewater treated by your system and avoid possible system failure and costly repairs.
5. Plant grass or other shallow-rooted plants over the drainfield; avoid deep rooted plants and trees.
6. Direct runoff away from the drain field.
7. Properly dispose of medications, chemicals, and other non-biodegradable solid wastes – do not flush.
8. Keep accurate records of your septic system.
9. Keep irrigation sprinklers at least 10 feet from drain field.

SIGNS OF SEPTIC SYSTEM FAILURE OR MALFUNCTION

The Washington State Department of Health has created a list of warning signs that your septic system may be failing. These include:

- Water and sewage backing up into the home
- Bathtubs, showers, and sinks draining very slowly
- Gurgling sounds from the plumbing system
- Standing water or damp spots near the septic tank or drainfield
- Bad odors near the septic tank or drainfield
- Bright green, spongy lush grass over the septic tank or drainfield
- Algal blooms in nearby ponds or lakes
- High levels of nitrates or coliform bacteria in water wells

If you see any of these signs or have other reason to suspect your septic system may be failing, contact a local septic system service provider, or your local health department right away. For more information on system failure, visit the [DOH website](#).

If you need to repair or replace your septic system, financial assistance may be available. Check out the resources below for more information.



Financial Assistance Programs Available in Mason, Thurston, and Pierce Counties

Clean Water Loans (CRAFT 3) — Resources to replace failing septic systems. Craft3 has unique approval criteria and repayment terms that work for a range of property types and family circumstances.

- **ELIGIBILITY:** homeowners, or non-owner-occupied units, septic must be at least 25 years old or must be failing or owner must have been contacted by Health officials
- **LINK:** <https://www.craft3.org/Borrow/clean-water-loans>

USDA Rural Development Program — Provides loans in rural areas for septic repairs. Funding is based on income.

- **CONTACT:** Office of Rural Development, 360-704-7760
- **LINK:** <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/wa>

Financial Assistance Programs Available in Pierce County

Pierce County Human Services — Provides low interest loans for septic system repairs to low income households.

- **CONTACT:** Laura Charbonneau, 253-798-4344; or Shannon Shuman, 253-798-6905
- **LINK:** [Pierce County Human Services](#)

Sewer Connection Assistance — Provides matching funding to help connect properties with failing septic system to the county's sewer system

- **CONTACT:** Pierce County Public Works and Utilities Division, 253-798-5040
- **LINK:** <http://www.co.pierce.wa.us/3693/Sewer-Connection-Assistance>

Financial Assistance Programs Available in Thurston County

Clear Choices for Clean Water — Provides free and reduced-cost resources for residents of Henderson and Nisqually Shellfish Protection districts. Rewards include: free native plants, organic compost, slow-release fertilizer, soil testing, and \$25 rebate for septic pumping.

- **CONTACT:** [Nora White](#), Thurston Conservation District, 360-754-3588 ext. 105

LOTT Septic to Sewer Rebates — LOTT is offering a rebate of 50-75% off the LOTT connection fee for property owners that are converting from an on-site septic system to the public sewer system. This is a temporary pilot program for 2017-2018 that is subject to available funding on a first-come, first-serve basis and may be discontinued at any time.

- **CONTACT:** *In Lacey:* Lacey Public Works, 360-491-5600
In Olympia: Olympia Public Works, 360-753-8562
In Tumwater: Tumwater Public Works, 360-754-4140