


# Skagit County Code 12.05 **On-site Sewage Code**

Charese Gainor  
Environmental Health Specialist | Public Health  
Skagit County

---

1




## How We Got Here

- On-site septic regulations start with Washington State Department of Health.
- Washington Administrative Code Chapter 246-272A is the basis for all septic systems in State.
- WADOH began the rule revision process in 2018.
- Adoption by Washington State Board of Health January 10, 2024.

---


2



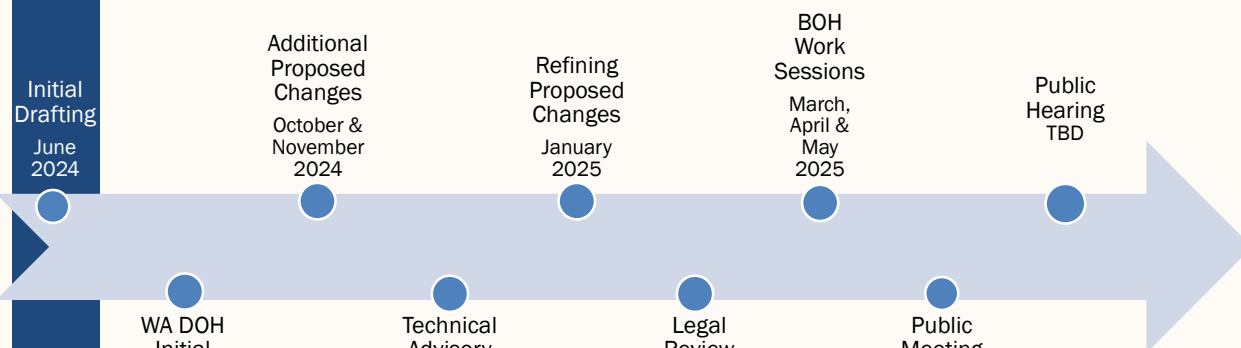
## How We Got Here

- Rule effective dates staggered with most revisions effective April 1, 2025.
- WADOH revising WAC sets in motion all Local Health Jurisdiction reviewing and updating local regulations.
- All LHJ regulations must be as stringent as WAC; regulations cannot be less stringent.

3

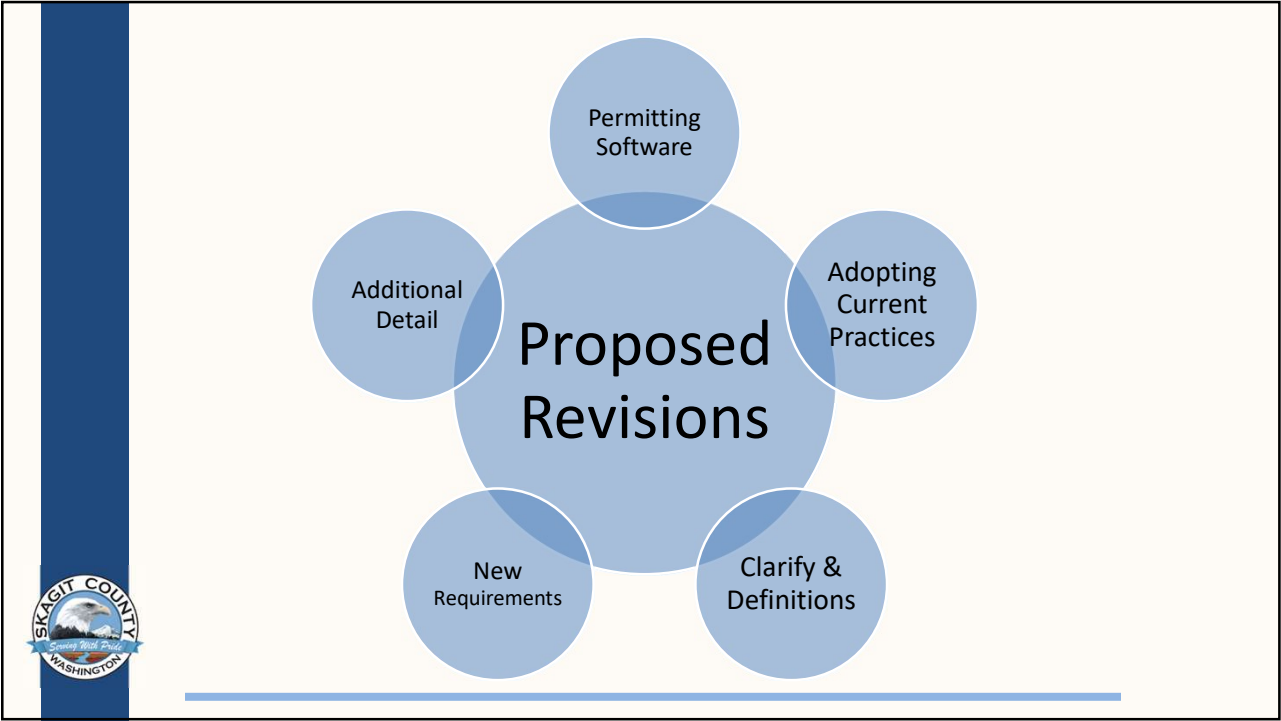


## Timeline



Milestone	Timeline
Initial Drafting	June 2024
WA DOH Initial Review	September 2024
Additional Proposed Changes	October & November 2024
Technical Advisory Group	December 2024
Refining Proposed Changes	January 2025
Legal Review	Late-February & Early March 2025
BOH Work Sessions	March, April & May 2025
Public Meeting	June 2025
Public Hearing	TBD


4



5

Permitting/Software Related		
Redesign	Renew	Revision
changes made to a previously approved and issued permit design prior to the approved design being installed. A redesign must meet all the permit requirements in section 12.05.090.	extending the expiration date of a certification or permit prior to the existing expiration date.	change to a septic design for a permit that has been assigned a permit number, where the change is made before the permit is approved and issued.


6



## Adoption of Current Practice

- Adopt WADOH’s Department Standards and Guidance (DS&G)
- Accept past product specific recorded documents to satisfy current general template
- Installation during wet season
- Compliance schedule for parcels with multiple OSSs

7



## Site & Soil Evaluation

**Site evaluation:**  
the process of evaluating the proposed site capabilities to accept the expected wastewater based on environmental conditions, physical features, and wastewater characteristics as described in Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems Manual, Chapter 5.5

**Soil evaluation:**  
the evaluation of the soil horizon’s texture, structure, compaction, and other characteristics to determine the Soil Type as defined in WAC Chapter 246-272A-0220 Table V.

8

## Record Drawing

The record drawing shall be the responsibility of the designer or installer of record.

Only individuals certified in Skagit County as installers or Washington State licensed designers are permitted to:

- Develop,
  - Certify with stamp/signature and date, and
  - Submit record drawings,
- unless the homeowner is the designer or installer of record.



9

## Adding Clarity & Definitions

- CEU (continuing education unit)
- Conventional Pressure Distribution
- Reiteration of existing WAC, RCW, and WADOH DS&G



10

## Health Officer-approved training

Courses provided by:

- Washington On-Site Sewage Association,
- National Onsite Wastewater Recycling Association, or
- other on-site specific training, as approved by the Health Officer on a case-by-case basis.



11

## Operational Permit

A permit that is issued for a term of **one year** and **renewed annually** upon receipt of a complete application and fee.


At the time of initial permit application or at the time of permit renewal the department may:

- Impose such permit conditions,
- Requirements for system improvements, and
- Compliance schedules...

...as it determines are reasonable and necessary to ensure that the system functions as intended.



12




## Highest Seasonal Water Table

When insufficient information is available to determine the highest seasonal water table, persons performing soil and site evaluations shall measure and document water table measurements during the wet season.

(a) Wet season review may consist of **multiple site visits** to the test pits generally between **November and April**. Season may vary based on actual conditions.


(b) When the site and soil evaluation indicate the depth of soil to a water table is **less than 18 inches**, a wet season review may be completed to **confirm that there are at least 12 inches**.



## Variance vs Waiver

Waiver	Variance
an exemption from Washington Administrative Code Chapter 246-272A as authorized under RCW 70.05.072 and WAC 246-272A-0420	a deviation or exemption from Skagit County Code Chapter 12.05

Application for a waiver or variance associated with a permit application shall be submitted with the application materials to be considered a complete application.



## Mixed Inputs & 2<sup>nd</sup> Compartment


**Mixed Inputs**

For systems receiving wastewater flow from multiple structures, the system may have:

- (a) A single septic tank, sized to meet the combined total bedroom/flow minimum tank volume; or
- (b) A septic tank for each structure that meets the minimum tank volume for that structure.

**Septic Tank 2<sup>nd</sup> Compartments**

The second compartment of a septic tank shall not be utilized as a pump basin or lift station. A separate tank or an additional compartment must be utilized if pumping of wastewater is necessary to meet the requirements of this section.




## Development & OSS

Occupancy of a building requiring an OSS shall not occur until the site-specific septic system design has been approved, OSS has been installed, OSS has been inspected by the Health Department, and final approval has been issued by the Health Department upon acceptance of the record drawing.

- (a) Occupancy for existing structures seeking expansion or change in use of the structure may require a septic permit to modify the existing system to meet the proposed change.
- (b) Building permits or permit extensions for sewage producing structures should have a Health Department approved wastewater disposal method.






## Proposed New Requirements

- Holding tank operational permit
- Connection to sewer for new development.
- Filter Media certification
- Routine Inspection Compliance with Building Permits
- PTI & Routine = same level of detail
- Tank replacements with drainfield repair permits
- Timeline for payment for fees
- Final Construction Inspection request timeline

17




## Bedroom

Any room normally used for sleeping and indicated as such on building plans. The minimum number of bedrooms per square foot of floor area (basement, first, second, etc.) shall be:

Total square footage	# of bedrooms
1000 sq ft	1 bedroom
1001 - 2000sq ft	2 bedrooms
2001 - 3000 sq ft	3 bedrooms
Each additional 500 sq ft or portion thereof shall	1 bedroom

Use of 1-bedroom applies only to a secondary structure being served by an existing on-site sewage system (e.g., a studio ADU and a 3-bedroom single family residence served by system designed for 4-bedrooms).


18



## Level 1 & Level 2 Providers

**Level 1:**  
certified to install/inspect conventional gravity systems, conventional pressure distribution systems, and gravity with pump systems.

**Level 2:**  
certified to install/inspect public domain system types (mound, sand filters, etc.) as well as proprietary alternative systems in which they provide documentation of specific training from the manufacturer.



## Record Drawing Timeline

The designer of record or installer shall submit the as-built record drawing and Health Officer approved cover sheet to the Health Officer in a timely manner of the final inspection completed by the department.

- (a) For **repair permits, expansion permits, and new gravity system permits**, the record drawing shall be submitted within **90 calendar days of the final inspection**.
- (b) For all installations not included in (a), the record drawing shall be submitted prior to department issuing approval for use as referenced in SCC 12.05.210.

## Number of Soil Evaluation Test Pits

### New system design

- A minimum of **three soil evaluation test pits** must be characterized.
- Two test pits in the proposed primary drainfield area and one in the proposed reserve area are recommended.
- One soil test pit in the primary area may be accepted if previous soil evaluations were approved after July 22, 1984.



21


## Number of Soil Evaluation Test Pits

### Repair

- A minimum of **one soil evaluation test pit** is required when the design proposal is for a repair design of an existing system without a reserve area designated on the original system design.
- Two test pits are recommended.



22




## Homeowner Installation Education

The resident owner provides documentation of:

- (i) Equivalent of two years of employment experience within the construction or excavation industry;
- (ii) Completing a Washington On-Site Sewage Association installer training, or equivalent; or
- (iii) Otherwise approved by the Health Officer, in their sole discretion.

Removes the allowance for pump to gravity (dosing gravity) systems.

Eligible only when waiver or variance is not required for approval.



## Homeowner Installation Inspection

OSS installed by a resident owner must schedule an inspection to meet the Health Department and/or licensed designer and have an inspection:

- (a) Prior to installation,
- (b) During construction, and
- (c) At final construction prior to backfilling.

## Homeowner Routine Inspection

- Eligible for conventional gravity systems only.
- Location is greater than 200-ft from marine water and 100-ft from surface waters.
- Have a routine inspection completed by a certified operation and maintenance provider within the last three cycles.
- Authorization to complete inspection does not transfer with ownership or new system installed. Reauthorization is required.



25


## Non-Residential Routine Inspections

The following facilities served by an OSS require O&M inspections annually:

- (a) Transient Accommodations and short-term rentals;
- (b) Schools, educational, and childcare facilities – public and private;
- (c) Group homes such as but not limited to nursing homes and treatment centers; and
- (d) Other non-residential establishments that may produce effluent other than residential sewage, such as, but not limited to, stores, offices, and churches.




26



## Wastewater Strength Testing

Upon request, any non-residential establishments shall supply the Health Department with water usage data and effluent wastewater strength tested by an accredited laboratory.

27



## Corrective Actions

The Health Department may require corrective action if:

- Any component of an OSS is observed to be encroached upon,
- Drainfield is reported to not accept effluent, or
- Documentation shows the operating capacity or wastewater strength exceeds the approved design, or
- Other situations deemed a public health hazard by the Health Officer.

Corrective action may include, but not limited to, a system evaluation and/or permit to modify the system to meet current requirements. A compliance schedule may be developed.

28

## Provider Certification Requirements

- Be a valid business registered with WA State.
- Education courses and evaluation of courses completed with entity outside of WOSSA and NOWRA.
- Clarification of the preferred written examination.
- Education/experience requirements for Level 1 & Level 2 certification.
- Renewal credits must be distinct and not reused from latest certification.
- No outstanding record drawing, inspection reports, or pumping reports.



29

## Revisions – Additional Detail

- Property Transfer Inspections for vacant structures
- Minimum Land Area provision & waivers



30

## Inspection & Pumping Reporting Timeline

Following inspection or pumping, certified O&M specialists and certified pumpers must:

- (a) Submit an on-site sewage system report to the Health Officer, the property owner, and if applicable, the property buyer, **within 30 calendar days** following the inspection or pumping; and
- (b) Immediately – **within seven calendar days** – report potential failures to the Health Officer. Submit photo(s) of the potential failure observed when possible.



31

## Abandonment


Persons shall:

- Have a current and issued permit for a repair/replacement with the Health Department or permit to connect to sewer with the local authority. Other situations will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.
  - (i) Submit an abandonment application and pay the associated fee when abandonment is not completed as part of a repair or tank replacement permit;
- Notify the Health Department within **30 calendar days** of abandonment by submitting the appropriate abandonment form provided by the Health Department.



32






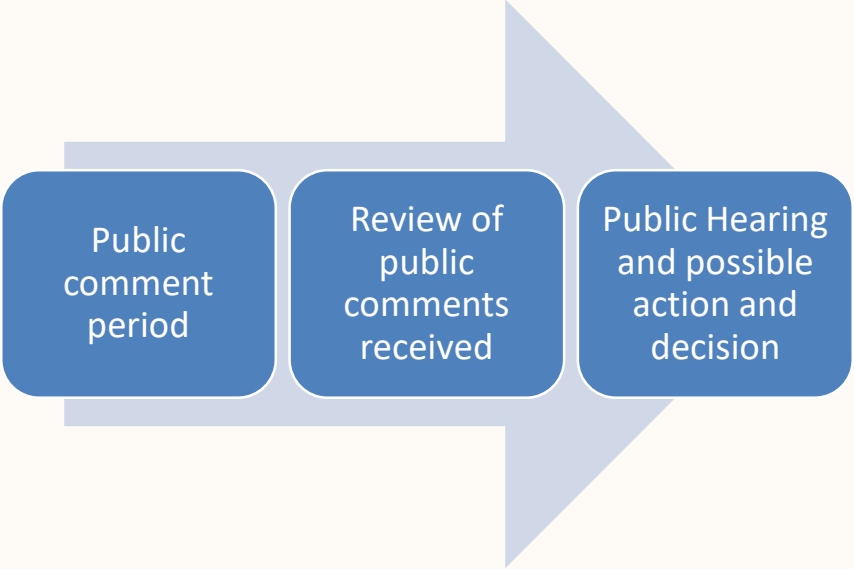
## Waiver & Variance Review

- Requests for waivers from any requirement in WAC 246-272A must be submitted with DOH’s *Request for Waiver from State Regulations* form ([Publication 337-175](#)).
- Requests for a variance from any requirement in this Chapter shall be submitted to the Health Officer in writing on forms provided by the Health Department.
- Review of waiver and variance requests will begin upon receipt of the completed form and payment of associated fees.
  - Requests related to a design or OSS permit will be reviewed with and along with the **timeline of the OSS permit application**.
  - Requests not related to permitting will be reviewed and applicants will be issued a written response **within 15 working days**.

33




## What’s Next?



```
graph LR; A[Public comment period] --> B[Review of public comments received]; B --> C[Public Hearing and possible action and decision];
```


34



## Public Comment

- Email [septic@co.skagit.wa.us](mailto:septic@co.skagit.wa.us) with subject line of “Proposed OSS Code Comment”
- Mailed or delivered to 301 Valley Mall Way, Suite 110, Mount Vernon, WA 98273
- Verbally in office, over the phone, or at Public Hearing.

35



Contact Information:

Charese Gainor  
On-Site & Drinking Water Lead  
Skagit County Public Health

Britt Pfaff Dunton  
Environmental Health Manager  
Skagit County Public Health

[Septic@co.skagit.wa.us](mailto:Septic@co.skagit.wa.us)

360-416-1500

36