



Mason County Environmental Public Health 2009 in Review

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Washington Public Health Standards
Assuring a Safe, Healthy Environment for People



Environmental Health Staff

- Cindy Waite - Onsite lead, Department of Licensing Board, Onsite Technical Advisory Committee, Mason County Onsite Advisory Committee
- Amanda Reynolds - Onsite program, Onsite Sewage System professionals certification
- Penny Orth - Onsite, Operation & Maintenance program
- Carol Spaulding, RS - Water Quality, Lab certifications, Vector and Living Environment
- Stephanie Kenny - Water Quality, Oakland Bay Clean Water District, Stormwater Project
- Amy Georgeson - Water Quality, Hood Canal Centennial Clean Water projects & Totten Inlet project, Stormwater Project
- Rose Swier - Solid and Hazardous Waste Program, Solid Waste Advisory Committee representative
- Jess Mosley - Food Program, ICS instructor, Mason County Emergency Planning Council representative
- Arlene Hyatt - Drinking Water Program, Water Quality projects
- Debbie Riley, RS - Environmental Health Manager

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In 2009, we...

Onsite Sewage:

Issued 301 onsite septic system permits, 77 were repairs. Nineteen of the 77 repairs (nearly 25%) were identified by an unsatisfactory maintenance report, supporting the success of our O&M program. Processed and provided technical assistance for 51 pre-applications and generated 38 loan status reports to ensure that homeowners installed and maintained onsite sewage systems and drinking water wells in a manner that protects public health. Processed 20 short plats and 4 large lot subdivisions.

Certified 18 septic system pumpers, 72 installers, and 30 operation and maintenance specialists to work in Mason County. Provided one workshop for pumpers and O&M specialists to explain the implementation of the data entry fee for those who want Mason County Public Health to enter their service reports into the database. Staffed the Onsite Advisory Committee meetings. Met with Mason County Realtors and area Master Builders to ask for input and explain proposed changes to Mason County local Onsite Regulations and changes to our permitting process.

Enhanced the operation and maintenance (O&M) program to remind homeowners when septic system service is due for their onsite system. Sent out 2,023 reminders for service to homeowners. Provided onsite septic system information at 10 public events/workshops and developed educational materials and fact sheets to increase public awareness of onsite sewage system operation and maintenance and water quality throughout the county.

Increased the number of onsite septic systems in the O&M database to a total of 25,297. Started a project to scan onsite septic system records in Oakland Bay and Hood Canal marine recovery areas. To date 2,178 records were pulled from the parcel files, 1,021 have been 'truthed' in preparation for scanning, and 520 have been scanned/indexed. The records scanned as part of this project will be available to the public through the Mason County web site within the next 2 years.

Mason County Onsite Regulations, including a new requirement for onsite service event at time of property transfer, were rewritten and approved by the Board of Health. The Mason County Onsite Standards were updated. The onsite lead serves on the Department of Licensing Board for onsite wastewater treatment systems, the onsite technical review committee, and the onsite advisory committee.

Water Quality:

Completed the Oakland Bay Onsite System Marine Recovery Area grant project funded by Onsite Management Plan competitive funds, compiled the data and submitted a final report. Conducted 3 sanitary surveys and 2 dye tests in Oakland Bay. The Oakland Bay work, shoreline survey and completion of other Oakland Bay Action Plan Strategy tasks continue funded by a different funding source through the end of 2010.

Assisted the City of Shelton by implementing an investigation of water quality following the sewer basin upgrades. Developed a plan and sampled regularly at 15 sites in the city. An analysis of the results will be submitted to the city in early 2010. Previously the city had no surface water quality data, lacking the resources to test. We were able to fill this gap for the City through the Oakland Bay Clean Water District work.

Worked cooperatively with Mason County Public Works on a number of water quality projects in Belfair, Allyn, Hoodsport and Oakland Bay. Three of the projects have been completed and the final reports submitted. Two projects, micoremediation and stromwater, are ongoing.

Participated in a Squaxin Island Tribe Environmental Protection Agency grant project by developing and overseeing a septic system retrofit rebate program for Oakland Bay homeowners. Forty-one rebates have been issued to homeowners who added risers and/or effluent filters to their existing septic system, allowing easy access for service.

Participated in public education and outreach events including: Oysterfest, Oakland Bay Open House, and Onsite Septic System classes for homeowners conducted jointly with WSU Extension. Attended meetings for Oakland Bay Clean Water District, Oakland Bay CWD education subcommittee, HCWEN, Totten Eld TMDL, WRIA 16, HCDOP, and Conservation District Supervisors.

Collected 1,201 surface water samples for complaints, the stormwater and micoremediation projects, and Oakland Bay work. Additional samples were collected at 16 sites and sent out for analysis for items including: nutrients, total suspended solids, etc. At those stormwater sites staff collected information regarding temperature, dissolved oxygen, conductivity, pH, and flow. This stormwater work is funded to continue into mid-2011.

As part of the Little Skookum Fecal Coliform Pollution Reduction Project we reviewed 708 onsite septic system records, identified 201 priority systems, inspected 170 sites, performed sanitary surveys at 93 sites and completed 1 dye trace. Identified 6 failing onsite septic systems, 1 repair was completed and 2 homeowners were actively working on their repairs by the end of the year. Educational packets were sent to homeowners at priority sites. O&M service events were performed on 59 septic systems in the project area between October 2008 and September 2009.

Shellfish:

Provided educational materials to the public at Oysterfest. Collected bi-weekly mussel samples from Jarrell's Cove for biotoxins testing. Provided public health warning signs for biotoxin events affecting recreational shellfish beaches, and provided public health warning signs to individual homeowners for their beaches.

On July 15, 2009, 25 acres of shellfish growing area in North Bay were downgraded from Approved to Conditionally approved. Work continues in this area as funding allows including coordination with Mason County Utilities on public sewer issues. On November 4, 2009, 300 acres of shellfish growing were upgraded from Prohibited to Approved. Credit for this upgrade is credited to the efforts of the Oakland Bay Clean Water District partners and area homeowners.

Shellfish growing areas in Oakland Bay, Pickering Passage, Hood Canal #9, and North Bay are threatened due to water quality. Stations in Annas Bay, Hood Canal #6, Pickering Passage, Reach Island, and Rocky Bay are classified with concerns due to water quality by Washington State Department of Health 2009 Early Warning System. An adequate, sustainable source of funding is needed to address these concerns and to maintain the water quality in other shellfish growing areas throughout the county.

Water Laboratory:

The lab was closed to the public at the end of January 2009. Arrangements were made with Thurston County Public Health to accept water samples from Mason County 2 days a week, allowing Mason County residents to drop off samples at our offices for a continued level of service. Private labs continued a pick up for analysis service in Shelton and in Belfair. Although this was a big change for our former customers, it seems to have filled the need with the closure of our laboratory. We still process our water quality samples for special or grant funded projects.

Drinking Water:

In order to insure proper operation of public water supplies, sanitary survey inspections were completed on 28 Group A public water systems. Three special purpose investigations of Group A systems were performed to assess potential drinking water contamination issues. Ensured proper well locations by performing 59 well site inspections for two-party, Group B and Group A water systems.

Reviewed designs, inspected and approved 10 new Group B public water systems. Reviewed designs, inspected and approved 25 two-party water systems. Resolved 1 Group B non-acute MCL (maximum contaminant level) violation with disinfection. Required one Group B water system to install permanent treatment due to repeated bacterial contamination violations.

Ensured that new wells are constructed properly and old wells no longer in use are removed from service by conducting 62 new well seal inspections out of 90 wells drilled in 2009 and was on-site during 4 well decommissions. 102 Group B water systems have been researched and added to the Tidemark database, enabling staff to search for water system connections by parcel number. Between the on-site and drinking water programs, 238 total water adequacy reviews were performed for public and private water systems in 2009.

Food Safety:

Conducted inspections at 258 food service establishments and 173 temporary events.

Contracted with WSU Co-operative Extension to provide food handlers classes in Shelton and Belfair and issued 2,202 food worker cards.

Living Environment:

Conducted 14 routine inspections of 9 permitted pools and 5 permitted spas at hotel/motels and apartment complexes to prevent illness and unintentional drowning. One pool was decommissioned in 2009.

Sent 12 birds in for West Nile Virus (WNV) testing, 1 positive. The positive crow was the first positive WNV bird on the West Side of the State in 2009. Numerous calls were answered concerning dead birds of numerous wild species. Provided WNV information to the media, at public events and in county building lobbies. Trapped mosquitoes for identification by the State Department of Health. Sent 2 bats to the state lab for rabies testing. Responded to 9 bat calls and 1 cat call. The situation involving the cat required it be tested for rabies, results were negative.

Provided information on vector control to homeowners and the media. Followed up on 8-dog bite reports with Mason County & City of Shelton Animal control units.

Responded to miscellaneous calls including a dead deer on Allyn's Beach Park, swimmers itch from Mason Lake, and an unusual spider found at Ornamental Stone in Allyn. The spider was identified by WSU as a non-harmful type of circular web spider transplanted here from a warmer climate.

Emergency Preparedness:

Used the ICS model to respond to H1N1 Flu outbreaks in Mason County in the spring and again in the fall. Environmental Health staff worked at Mason General's flu clinics as parking, safety and runners as well as assisting with Public Information Officer duties.

Participates on the Mason County Emergency Planning Council and Hazard Identification and Mitigation workgroup as well as Public Health Local Emergency response coordinator and Mason County's Public Health Emergency Preparedness and Response representative. Incident Command System 300 and 400 instructor.

Solid and Hazardous Waste:

Participated in 2 educational efforts, some with Mason County Recycling, providing information and staff expertise. Sits on the Mason County Solid Waste Advisory Committee.

Responded to 192 new solid waste complaints. Closed 160 complaint cases. Continued follow-up work with approximately 250 residents to come into compliance through follow up and enforcement when necessary. Issued 69 civil infractions for solid waste violations. Took 22 solid waste cases to the Hearings Examiner.

Tracked and provided oversight to 26 solid waste facilities in Mason County who handle solid waste or biosolids as a part of their business activities, inspecting 20 of these facilities.

Environmental Health Administration:

Actively participated with the Washington State Environmental Health Directors and the Washington State Association of Local Public Health Officials legislative committee. Represented Mason County Public Health on the Puget Sound Partnership's South Sound Core Group. Served on the Mason Matters Board of Directors. Participated on the Department's Incident Command Team for H1N1 swine flu response. Appointed to chair the NACCHO Environmental Public Health Tracking Workgroup and EHD Zoonotic Disease Committee.

This report highlights some of the accomplishments and gives a number for some of the day to day work performed by the nine professional Mason County Environmental Public Health staff and their manager. Adjustments have been made to accommodate our reduced revenue over the past 2 years while maintaining service to our citizens. Partnerships with other groups, agencies, Tribes, and departments have strengthened; using efficiencies and expertise like never before. It truly does take a village to perform the work we need to do to protect human health and the environment.

“Always Working for a Safer and Healthier Mason County”