

Quarterly Status Report-First Quarter 2009
Island County Public Health Department
EH Onsite Enhancement
DOH Contract Number C14949

SCOPE OF WORK

Summary

Island County continues to develop the resources and technical expertise necessary to implement revisions to WAC 246-272A in accordance with the Island County On-Site Sewage System Management Plan; specifically, the development or enhancement of an OSS database system and the development of a Homeowner Septic Training (HOST) program certifying homeowner to inspect their own systems. Funding support has been directed, along with Island County Health Department (ICHHD) resources, towards these two primary efforts.

Island County has contracted with Balanced Action, Inc. for the programming services necessary for the development of a new OSS database system. The new data system will run on the Sequel Server 2005 platform and is being developed using C++, C-Sharp, VB6 and .Net 2.0 environments. The system has been designed, programmed and developed and has been populated with existing OSS, ownership and permit history records. Included in those records are the scanned images for every site evaluation and asbuilt that ICHD has on record for each property utilizing an OSS. The database went “live” to all employees in the OSS program in the middle of August 2008.

The database continues to be used by professional and technical staff, and capacity is being built in to run reports related to compliance and activity. There have been significant changes in how the HOST program is administered, and how the program is being funded.

Tasks as outlined in Contract

Task 1: *Query the Island County (IC) Assessor’s data system and the On-Site System (OSS) data system to determine which developed properties in IC are not represented by an OSS record (identifying the “unknowns”). Properties identified through the query will receive a survey to determine if an OSS exists on the property.*

This task has not been completed at this time. Contact has been made with the Assessor’s office staff to begin the preliminary stages of this task.

Task 2: *Design, program and launch a web-based portal for public access to OSS records (asbuilts, site evaluations, maintenance reports, etc).*

This task has not been completed at this time. The web-based portal is available for beta testing by staff, which will begin as soon as the equipment necessary has been set up. We hope to have this feature tested by the end of the second quarter.

Task 3: *Design and program an auto-reporting component for the OSS data management system. Auto reports would include reminders to inspect and past due notices for inspection.*

This task has not been completed at this time. Auto-reporting is an essential function of the new OSS database and is still being developed by the programmer.

Task 4: *Design and program standardized and custom reports from OSS data management program.*

Several standard and custom reports have been run on the new database. Staff currently is testing these reports, as well as adding new reports. Communication with Balanced Action has been very good and significant progress has been made in this area. Work on the public access portal has pushed completion of this step back, though work continues to be done with the hope of having a series of reports available by the end of the second quarter.

Task 5: *Develop the HOST (Homeowner Septic Training) program. Revisions to Island County On-Site Sewage System regulations allow homeowners to conduct inspections on conventional gravity and simple pressure systems only after receiving certification of Health Officer approved training. The program will include both field and classroom training, the production of digital training materials, and the construction of two outdoor classrooms. A pilot of the program will be completed by June 2008 while the full program will be launched prior to January 1, 2009.*

The HOST program was launched in September of 2008. There were seven classes offered during this month, with another 24 scheduled for the final quarter of 2008. During the second quarter of 2008, packets were assembled for each member attending a HOST class. The packets included an informational DVD (which will also be available at local libraries and for anyone interested in general sewage system information) and other resources of interest for people who live with a septic system.

Also during the second quarter, two “outdoor classrooms” were constructed with local installers to serve as demonstrations for HOST participants. There is one demonstration area on Whidbey Island and another on Camano Island. Each include a septic tank and pump tank to grade, a “live” drainfield with inspection ports and squirt caps for pressure testing, and a model drainfield that is partially unearthed to show participants the components of a drainfield. The classes thus far have been very well received.

The execution of this program was handled through a partnership with the Island County Planning and Community Development Department. In 2009, the Board of Health assigned the full task of the HOST program to the Island County Public Health Department. This program has been re-structured a bit, and a new partnership has been formed with the WSU Extension office.

The WSU Extension office has in the past offered a “Septic 101” class. Island County Public Health has partnered with WSU to make Septic 101 a prerequisite to the HOST program. Homeowners interested in becoming HOST certified must take Septic 101,

watch a video, then take a Septic 201 class that is done at the demonstration facility and taught by Island County Public Health Staff. These certifications are good for one person, for one specific property.

Additional Tasks not listed on the contract

Island County continues to license Maintenance Service Providers, and currently has nearly 40 professionals certified to inspect sewage disposal systems.

Island County staff also continue to pursue opportunities to engage the public in dialogue about the new regulations and the process for compliance. To date the target audiences have primarily been real estate offices, community groups such as the Water Resources Advisory Committee, and Home Owners Associations. Large scale public outreach (newspapers, mailings, etc) will begin in April of 2009.

BUDGET

Summary

There has been no additional budget activity since the last quarterly report.

In December a budget for Environmental Health was adopted by the Board of Island County Commissioners eliminating funding for the O&M program from the general fund, and recommending that a fee be developed for this purpose. Two fees were presented to the Island County Board of Health, and a fee associated with time of sale inspections only was adopted. It was also decided that we would communicate with the Board of Health quarterly about the status of funding for the program, and whether or not the fee was sufficient.

At the March 2009 Board of Health meeting, staff was directed to come up with some possible alternative sources of income for the O&M program. These alternatives may include charging a recording fee for every inspection, charging for Septic 201, or increasing the time of sale fee. Other ideas are also being researched, and they will be presented at the April 2009 Board of Health meeting.