

## **OSS Technical Advisory Committee Meeting**

February 27, 2024

### **Present:**

Lynn Schneider, PHSKC  
Lara Brezina, PHSKC  
Corrina Marote, PHSKC  
Eunbi Lee, PHSKC  
Meagan Jackson, PHSKC  
Jarone Baker, PHSCK  
Pam McCain, John L Scott Real Estate  
George Streepy, Streepy Septic Design  
Kelsey Payne, Snoqualmie Tribe  
Roger Parker, WADOH  
Dan Cardwell, King County DLS, UTRC Chair  
Dustan Bunt, Above Grade Septic  
Craig Belognia, G&N Septic  
Curtis Johnson, Tri-County Monitoring and Septic  
Adam Cushman, Columbia Land Services  
Jay Regenstreif, Sammamish Plateau Water and Sewer District  
Ken Miller, Lakehaven Water and Sewer District  
Cleo Neculae, WA ECY  
Tanya MacFarlane, City of Bellevue Stormwater  
Greg Wingard

Faith Addicott, Kelly Hayden, Floret Khosa, Harry Muchineripi – consultants for OSS code revision outreach

### [Introductions and meeting logistics](#)

The facilitators introduced themselves and their consulting team. They outlined the meeting agenda, communication channels, and timeboxed discussion approach. Participants agreed to respectful engagement despite differences of opinion.

### [Holding tank management to prevent overflow discharges](#)

Industry professionals debated regulatory approaches to address the rare issue of holding tank failures, weighing compliance burdens versus environmental risks. They proposed data-driven solutions like mandatory periodic pumping reports to locate non-compliant tanks over prescriptive requirements.

### **Key takeaways from TAC discussion:**

- Adam proposed shifting focus to the 60 tanks not reporting and enforcing pumping requirements through mandatory reporting every 90 days in O&M contracts, prioritizing practicality over telemetry mandates.

- Jarome Baker questioned the effectiveness of implementing a dialer system without ensuring the holding tank owners maintain current pumping contracts, highlighting the importance of tracking service agreements. Without up-to-date contracts, the dialer system may not guarantee timely pumping services when required. Thus, ensuring contract maintenance is crucial for the dialer system's effectiveness
- Greg Wingard brought up compliance as well as proposing incentives and highlighted the public health department's lack of capacity to ensure compliance.
- Additionally recommended incentives should align with compliance efforts to offer alternative adherence options beyond enforcement.
- Ken Miller: Reminder that holding tanks are temporary measures and not intended as permanent solutions.

### [Decks over septic tanks and system access requirements](#)

Installers strongly opposed allowing decks over septic components, citing maintenance difficulties and liability risks. They noted homeowners resist repairs requiring deck removal. Regulators sought input on definitions that ensure future system access without unduly restricting property use.

#### **Key takeaways from TAC discussion:**

- Septic installers were opposed to allowing decks under 6 ft tall to be built over septic tanks
- Even if homeowners were required to build access points, installers felt that this was usually not good enough and they would end up having to destroy decks
- Some installers were even opposed to decks over 6 ft tall being built over OSS
- A 0 ft setback was discussed, but overall the professionals would prefer to keep a 5 ft setback between deck and OSS

### [Anticipating future home uses in system design](#)

Participants discussed challenges with oversized homes having few designated bedrooms yet hosting many occupants. They debated defining bedrooms and kitchens, or basing design on anticipated or maximum occupancy. Data on actual water usage patterns was requested to size systems appropriately.

#### **Key takeaways from TAC discussion:**

- Realtor representative: Planning for larger systems, getting ahead of future use, is wise.

- Septic professionals: Some definition of what a bedroom is or how rooms are defined / used would be helpful.
- From many perspectives: Occupancy really has a larger impact than definitions.
- Septic professionals: Alarm counts/ tracking alarms says more for septic safety than occupancy.
- All: Aligning on definitions with assessors and tax/use definitions,
- Septic professionals: Ultimately definitions yes, would help, but not sure how to best create or utilize.

### [Reporting requirements for OSS failures](#)

Industry pushed back on a 24-hour failure reporting mandate, citing repair coordination needs. They proposed 48-72 hours instead to avoid premature alarms while still addressing issues promptly. Regulators saw value in failure data collection to justify code changes despite lack of current data.

### **Key takeaways from TAC discussion:**

- Proposed exploring methods to capture data on system failures. Suggested that implementing measures to gather data would be advantageous for the county in understanding failure patterns, property types affected, and reasons behind failures. (Cleo)
- Question whether immediate reporting would still be required if a repair is scheduled for the following day?
- Need clarity on protocols for responding to and reporting issues promptly especially when repairs are in progress. (Curtis)
- Request for an extension for reporting time, citing concerns about the current 24-hour reporting requirement for O&M reports. Proposed extending the reporting timeframe to 48 or 72 hours.

### Public Comment:

- OSS owner representing group from North Bend where public sewer is not available. Thanked industry professionals for balanced comments. Concerned about the direction of the code with regards to increases in tank size or drainfield area, adding tanks for nitrogen reduction, which would be difficult to achieve on small lots. Want to be able to put in conforming systems. Would like additional

clarification on how the daily doses were determined, especially given recent focus on water efficiency.

- Curtis Johnson commented that in hundreds of cases, they have never seen a hydraulic failure, but they do see failures due to waste strength exceeding designed capacities. High BOD and FOGs often cause failures.