

**Testimony to the House Committee on Consumer Protection and  
Government Efficiency  
In support of HB 3172**

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Founded in 1968, the Oregon Environmental Council (OEC) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, membership-based organization. We advance innovative, collaborative solutions to Oregon's environmental challenges for today and future generations.

Chair Holvey and members of the House Committee on Consumer Protection and Government Efficiency:

Oregon Environmental Council supports HB 3172. The bill establishes a statewide inspection program for onsite septic tanks.

Over 30% of Oregonians dispose of sewage from their homes and businesses through the use of septic systems. Failing septic tanks are sources of high nutrient levels and bacterial contamination that threaten public health and water quality. It is all too easy for property owners to forget about septic tank maintenance – out of sight out of mind – while their malfunctioning septic tank releases raw sewage into the environment. There are known problems with septic tank contamination in the LaPine area, in the McKenzie River watershed, which is the drinking water source for the City of Eugene, and in coastal communities.

For these reasons, it is important to ensure that septic tanks are periodically inspected, beginning with inspections at the time of property transfer. Having knowledge about the condition of a property's onsite septic system would clearly be beneficial for property buyers, just like a home inspection. Malfunctioning septic tanks will never be repaired if their owners don't know that their septic tank has a problem.

*What about funding?*

Oregon's Department of Environmental Quality has been developing a rulemaking to establish an onsite septic tank inspection program in coastal areas, to comply with federal Coastal Nonpoint Programs from NOAA and EPA. This rulemaking has been put on hold, enabling DEQ to see what happens this legislative session before moving forward. Passing this legislation will move Oregon one step closer to meeting federal requirements.

Preventing raw sewage from entering our rivers, groundwater and drinking water sources should be a no-brainer for a state that prides itself on our environmental ethic. It is time for Oregon to address this pervasive problem.