

The Association of Oregon Counties Support SB 246

The Association of Oregon Counties (AOC) supports for SB 246 which creates an onsite septic loan program.

Over 30 percent of Oregonians rely on septic systems to treat wastewater from their homes and businesses. DEQ regulates the siting, design, installation and ongoing operation and maintenance of septic systems. Without this oversight, septic systems can fail or malfunction, pollute Oregon's land and waterways with raw sewage and create public health hazards.

Currently twenty-four county programs are operated under contract with DEQ, referred to as "contract counties" and DEQ operates the program in twelve counties, referred to as "direct service" counties.

There are two steps involved in the permitting process for most properties served by onsite septic systems. The first step is to evaluate the soil to determine if a septic system can be installed and what type of septic system is needed. The second step is to issue a construction permit that describes the requirements for the system such as the size of the septic tank, amount of drain field, depth of drain field, etc. Once the system is constructed, a pre-cover inspection of the system is performed to determine if the system meets the requirements of the permit and the onsite rules.

With both the counties and DEQ the cost of this process is covered by permit fees that the applicant pays to the county. These fees, however, do not provide funding for compliance or enforcement work. Inspections are done when a complaint is filed. The frustrating issue for many counties is that once a problem septic system is found, the home owner does not have the ability to pay for upgrades or repairs. Without outside resources, the county is put in a frustrating situation; the resident is creating a public and environmental health issue but there is no funding for a solution.

SB 246 addresses this issue by creating a loan program that customers can access for septic system repair or other solutions to address the problem. Counties believe that SB 246 is an extremely useful step in the right direction to addressing one of Oregon's environmental and public health issues. AOC supports the policy and supports the providing sufficient funding in order for the program to successfully meet the needs of its citizens.

AOC and the counties look forward to continuing to work with Senator Roblen, Representative McKeown, DEQ and other stakeholders to make this a successful program.

AOC strongly supports SB 246. For more information on AOC's position please contact policy manager, Mark Nystrom (mnystrom@aocweb.org/503-585-8351)