

## **The Association of Oregon Counties Supports SB 1563 as Amended**

In the 2013 Legislative Session the following budget note was added to DEQ's budget:

*“work with cities, counties and other stakeholders to identify innovative ways to utilize the fees assessed for the onsite septic program. The intended outcomes are to increase the quality and efficiency of how onsite septic services are delivered across the state. This may include re-examining the fee schedules and the viability of how the program is currently implemented through a combination of DEQ and contract-county programs. The Association of Oregon Counties has indicated it will provide staff support for these efforts and the Department shall report back during the 2014 legislative session with recommendations for improving the operations of the onsite septic program.”*

During the summer of 2013 the Onsite Septic Workgroup made a number of recommendations for improvement of the Onsite Program including the following:

DEQ should introduce a legislative concept in the 2015 Legislative session that is similar to Senate Bill 83 from the 2011 Legislative session that would support financial assistance, education and outreach.

A portion of this was attempted with the introduction of SB 246 (2015). The bill called for a low income loan program administered by DEQ to assist in replacement or repair of onsite septic systems. Unfortunately, this version of the bill would have resulted in expensive rule making and there were questions raised whether having the enforcing agency be the same agency administering the loan program.

The amendments in SB 1563 address these issues by creating a RFP to find a third-party to administer the loan. By doing so the rule-making process should be much less and a third-party with expertise and experience managing loans takes the financing away from the enforcement agency.

The Association of Oregon Counties strongly supports the amended SB 1563 and all efforts to improve the onsite septic program. AOC is committed to continuing to work with DEQ to find solutions and efficiencies to address these issues of person, public and environmental health.

Thank you for considering this issue and feel free to contact AOC Policy Manager Mark Nystrom with any questions or concerns ([mnystrom@oregoncounties.org](mailto:mnystrom@oregoncounties.org))