

# Mason County Environmental Public Health 2008 in Review

## Washington Public Health Standards Assuring a Safe, Healthy Environment for People

2008 was a year of change for Environmental Public Health. With the downturn in the building industry and reduction in onsite septic permits and well starts, revenues were below projections. To correct course and stay within the budget necessitated by the reduced revenue, two positions were eliminated and staff were laid off in July. The permit tech position in the onsite program was eliminated and one of the EHS positions in the solid waste program was eliminated. One more EHS position was eliminated to accommodate county contribution offered by the Board of County Commissioners during budget negotiations. In a public budget briefing on December 9, 2008 additional cuts to public health were announced, so additional cuts were made to our operating budget. The water lab was closed, eliminating one more EHS. In the span of 5 months EH staffing went from 15 to 11 including the EH manager. This is the same number of staff working in the department in 1999.

Progress was made toward developing a department wide strategic plan with all public health staff from both divisions working on the project.

*In 2008, we...*

### **Onsite Sewage:**

Issued 410 onsite septic system permits (113 were repairs), processed, provided technical assistance for 78 pre-applications and generated 48 loan status reports to ensure that homeowners installed and maintained onsite sewage systems and drinking water wells in a manner that protects public health. Processed 23 short plats and 6 large lot subdivisions.

Certified 15 septic system pumpers, 80 installers, and 23 operation and maintenance specialists to work in Mason County. Provided one workshop for county certified onsite professionals and staffed the Onsite Advisory Committee meetings.

Enhanced the operation and maintenance (O&M) program to remind homeowners when septic system service is due for their onsite system. Provided onsite septic system information at 8 public events/workshops and developed educational materials and fact sheets to increase public awareness of onsite sewage system operation and maintenance and water quality throughout the county. Have 25,142 onsite septic systems on the O&M database. Entered 4,047 service events (inspections, septic tank pumpings, O&M component service, etc) into the O&M database (2,325 pumps, 902 maintenance and 820 homeowner inspections).

In May a media blitz was conducted including radio spots and printed ads in 5 newspapers to promote septic system maintenance. In addition, 24,500 brochures were sent to homeowners of septic systems currently identified in the Mason County Operation & Maintenance database. The brochure included a return postcard labeled with a parcel number and site address. The postcard provides check boxes for the septic system owner to request educational information about septic

maintenance and records (if available) for their own system. Records and information were sent to over 1,000 homeowners who requested information.

### **Drinking Water:**

Completed sanitary surveys on 39 Group A public water systems to ensure proper operation of the systems. Ensured proper well location by performing 74 well site inspections for two-party, Group B and Group A wells. Reviewed designs and approved 14 Group B public water systems. Reviewed designs and approved 40 two-party water systems. Measured and recorded GPS locations of 75 Group B water system wells.

Completed 4 special purpose investigations of Group A systems to assess potential drinking water contamination. Resolved 7 Group B non-acute MCL (maximum contaminant level) violations with disinfection. Required one Group B water system to install permanent treatment due to repeated bacterial contamination violations.

Ensured that new wells are constructed properly and old wells no longer in use are removed from service by conducting 81 new well seal inspections out of 128 wells drilled in 2008 and 5 well decommissioning inspections. 86 Group B water systems have been researched and added to the Tidemark database, enabling staff to search for water system connections by parcel number. Between the onsite and drinking water programs, 391 total water adequacy reviews were performed for public and private water systems in 2008.

### **Food Safety:**

Conducted 557 inspections at 252 food service establishments and 103 temporary events.

Contracted with WSU Co-operative Extension to provide food handlers classes and issued 2,134 food worker cards in conjunction with 88 classes (includes Spanish language classes as necessary).

### **Emergency Preparedness:**

Completed Instructor Training and conducted two 16 hour classes in Incident Command System Level 300 Expanding Incidents, and one 8 hour class in Incident Command System level 400 Complex Incidents. Conducted Point of Distribution (POD) Training and participated in flu clinic using ICS management tools.

### **Living Environment:**

Conducted 18 routine inspections of permitted pools (13) and spas (5) at hotel/motels and apartment complexes to prevent illness and unintentional drowning. Two pools were decommissioned in 2008.

Sent 7 birds in for West Nile Virus (WNV) testing, 0 positive. Numerous calls were answered concerning dead birds of numerous wild species and one domestic chicken flock. Provided WNV information to the media, at public events and in county building lobbies. Trapped mosquitoes for identification by the State Department of Health.

Sent 10 animals (4 bats, 2 dogs, 3 cats and 1 raccoon) to the state lab for rabies testing Responded to 4 additional bat calls and 1 cat call that did not require testing. Provided information on vector control to homeowners and the media. Followed up on 21 dog bite reports with Mason County & City of Shelton Animal control units. Responded to 1 call about a rat infestation.

### **Solid and Hazardous Waste:**

Participated in 4 educational efforts, some with Mason County Recycling, providing information and staff expertise.

Responded to 132 new solid waste complaints. Closed 184 complaint cases. Continued follow-up work with approximately 200 residents to come into compliance through follow up and enforcement when necessary. Issued 60 civil infractions for solid waste violations. Took 33 solid waste cases to the Hearings Examiner.

Tracked and provided oversight to 26 solid waste facilities in Mason County who handle solid waste or biosolids as a part of their business activities.

Provided oversight on the cleanup of 2 illegal drug manufacturing or storage sites to ensure the abatement meets the Washington State Standards for cleanup.

### **Water Quality:**

Tested water at 2 marine swimming areas for bacterial pollution to assure the swimming areas meet bacteriological safety standards.

Worked cooperatively with the Mason Conservation District, WSU Mason County Extension, Department of Health, Department of Ecology Squaxin Tribe, Skokomish Tribe, Mason County Public Works, and other agencies/groups on a groundwater nutrient monitoring project, watershed planning, storm water monitoring, and ambient monitoring as part of the Hood Canal Dissolved Oxygen Program. Assessed fecal coliform pollution sources on Mission Creek and Little Mission Creek, in the Belfair UGA and in the Oakland Bay Clean Water District. Participated in experimental mycoremediation projects.

Participated in public education and outreach events: Oysterfest, Near Shore Restoration Project, Environmental Explorations, Youth Summit, Earth Day, Students in the Watershed, Oakland Bay Open House, Kennedy Creek Salmonfest, Webb Hill public presentation on the Hydro-geologic study, and Community and Home Owner's Association meetings. Attended meetings for WRIA 16, HCDOP, nitrogen work group, Totten Eld TMDL, Oakland Bay Shellfish Protection District, Annas Bay Shellfish Protection, Skokomish River TMDL, and Conservation District Supervisors.

Conducted 17 sanitary surveys (7 in Annas Bay, 2 in Oakland Bay, 6 in Hood Canal, 2 in North Bay), performed 11 septic system dye traces (4 in Annas Bay, 1 in Oakland Bay, 2 in North Bay, 4 in Hood Canal) and collected water samples (206 Oakland Bay, 57 in the Belfair UGA, 59 in

Allyn, 22 in Hoodport, 721 in Hood Canal including 89 in Annas Bay) in project focus areas. Provided homeowner education and 5 public information sessions.

### **Water Laboratory:**

Maintained State certification for 12 methods of drinking water and surface water analysis. Analyzed 147 nitrate samples, 1,669 drinking water samples, and 1,530 surface water samples which includes 178 Marine Beach samples (118 Mason County and 60 Skokomish Tribe), 7 Lake Samples, 43 Mason Conservation District samples and 252 Skokomish Tribe Ambient Project Samples.

### **Shellfish:**

Provided educational materials to the public at Oysterfest. Collected bi-weekly mussel samples from Jarrell's Cove for biotoxins testing. Provided public health warning signs for biotoxin events affecting recreations shellfish beaches, and provided public health warning signs to individual homeowners for their beaches.

### **Environmental Health Administration:**

Actively participated with the Washington State Environmental Health Directors and the Washington State Association of Local Public Health Officials legislative committee. Represented Mason County Public Health on the Puget Sound Partnership's South Sound Core Group. Served on the Mason Matters Board of Directors. Represented Environmental Health on the County's Emergency Management Planning Team. Appointed to chair the NACCHO Environmental Public Health Tracking Workgroup.

## **Mason County Environmental Health**

“Always Working For a Safer and Healthier Mason County”

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