

Mason County Environmental Health, 2004 in Review

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

In 2004, we...

Onsite Sewage:

Issued 709 onsite septic system permits, processed 1,114 building site applications and 122 commercial permits, provided technical assistance for 47 pre-applications and generated 171 loan status reports to ensure that homeowners installed and maintained onsite sewage systems and drinking water wells in a manner that protects public health.

Responded to 81 onsite sewage complaints. Certified 16 septic system pumpers, 59 installers, and 8 operation and maintenance specialists to work in Mason County. Provided one workshop for county certified onsite professionals.



Cindy Waite and Penny Orth with the Onsite Advisory Committee at the annual workshop.



Jess Mosley performing winter observations.

Implemented an operation and maintenance (O&M) program to remind homeowners when septic system service is due for their onsite system. Provided O&M information to over 5,000 homeowners in the Lower Hood Canal Watershed. Provided onsite septic system information at 3 public events and developed educational materials and fact sheets to increase public awareness of onsite sewage system operation and maintenance and water quality throughout the county.

Submitted an abstract to be a presenter at the Washington State Environmental Health Association's Annual Education Conference, topic to be "Mason County's New O&M Program".

Drinking Water:

Completed sanitary surveys on 45 Group "B" and 28 Group "A" water systems to ensure proper operation of the systems. Approved designs for 39 new Group "B" public water systems.

Completed 6 special purpose investigations to assess potential drinking water contamination. Resolved 15 Group "B" non-acute MCL violations with disinfection.

Ensured that new wells are constructed properly and old wells no longer in use are removed from service by conducting 140 new well seal inspections and 7 well decommissioning inspections. Ensured proper well location by approving 53 well sites.



Arlene Hyatt presenting to the Board of Health.



Jess Mosley inspecting a food service.

Food Safety:

Conducted 401 routine inspections at permitted retail food service establishments and issued 128 temporary event permits.

Investigated 22 foodborne illness complaints.

Sat on the core committee to revise the State of Washington food service regulations. Contracted with WSU Co-operative Extension to provide food handlers classes and issued 1695 food worker cards in conjunction with 86 classes (includes Spanish language classes as necessary).

Living Environment:

Conducted 17 routine inspections of permitted pools and spas at hotel/motels and apartment complexes to prevent illness and unintentional drowning.



Carol Spaulding testing pool water at the High School.



Amanda Reynolds hanging a dry ice mosquito trap.

Sent in 15 birds for West Nile Virus (WNV) testing, 0 positive. 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 17 animals (15 bats, 2 dogs) to the state lab for rabies testing, 0 positive. Provided information on vector control to homeowners and the media. Followed up on 13 dog and 2 cat bite reports.

Solid and Hazardous Waste:

Assessed contamination and developed health, safety, and analysis plans for 1 site that could potentially adversely impacting the environment through the release of pollutants.

Responded to 8 reported illegal drug manufacturing or storage sites to ensure proper cleanup.



Amy Georgeson writing hulk vehicle permits.



Rose Swier looking for evidence at an illegal dumpsite.

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

Responded to 184 new solid waste complaints. Closed 254 complaint cases. Issued 151 civil infractions for solid waste violations resulting in \$49,175 in fines in an effort to get properties cleaned up. Took 28 solid waste cases to the Hearings Examiner.

Water Quality:

Tested 2 marine swimming areas for bacterial pollution a total of 120 times. Posted the beach at Twanoh State Park with closure notices due to a high bacterial count, issued one swimming beach advisory, and issued a joint advisory with Kitsap County concerning a toxic algae bloom in a lake. Dye tested 8 septic systems in the vicinity of a commercial shellfish beach where harvested oysters were implicated in a Norovirus outbreak.

Worked cooperatively with the Mason Conservation District, WSU Co-operative Extension, Department of Health, Department of Ecology Squaxin Tribe, Skokomish Tribe, and other agencies/groups on the Lower Union River Restoration Study, WRIA 14/Hussman Grant, WRIA 16 Grant, Hood Canal Dissolved Oxygen Program, and the Skokomish River TMDL. Acted as the second person in the boat for DOH shellfish station sampling runs in Mason County, taking about 600 marine water samples. Monitored groundwater levels of 10 port piezometers throughout the Skokomish Valley.



Stephanie Kenny collecting surface water samples.



Pam Bennett-Cumming testing a monitoring well.

Collected 456 stream samples to assess long term pollution trends. Tested 14 lake swimming areas 79 times for bacterial pollution during the summer. Tested Malaney Creek after a septic pumper was discovered illegally dumping on his property adjacent to the creek. Performed 15 septic system dye traces and collected 285 water samples in project focus areas. Provided homeowner education and 3 public information sessions. Investigated 23 water quality-related public concerns including failing septic systems, discharges to fresh and salt water, unusual odors in surface water, and improper land use practices.

Water Laboratory:

Maintained State certification for 12 methods of drinking water and surface water analysis. Analyzed 125 nitrate samples, 1,934 drinking water samples & 1,797 surface water samples.



Carol Spaulding working in the lab.



Our Oysterfest display.

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 about 1 biotoxin event affecting recreations shellfish beaches, and provided public health warning signs to individual homeowners for their beaches.

Financial:

Performed accounting services and maintained financial records for Environmental Health's \$1,059,900 budget. Managed \$183,450 of EH grant work. Organized and reported payroll and accounting for 11 Environmental Health employees and the EH portion of 3 Health Administration staff.

Developed and implemented a computer based time accounting system for Health Services employees. Completed special projects for Environmental Health Programs.



Candy Archer working at her computer.



Debbie Riley, Environmental Health Manager

Environmental Health Administration:

Actively participated with the Washington State Environmental Health Directors as the statewide chair (2004-2005) and as a member of the Washington State Association of Local Public Health Officials executive board and legislative committee. Served on the Mason Matters Board of Directors as the treasurer.

Effectively managed Environmental Health programs, operating under budget, by acquiring unanticipated grant funding throughout the year. Represented Environmental Health on the County's Emergency Management Planning Team.

Mason County Environmental Health

“Always Working For a Safer and Healthier Mason County”