

OCEAN COUNTY WASTEWATER MANAGEMENT PLAN

Replacing All Previously Adopted Wastewater Management Plans

VOLUME 4 of 4
SEPTIC MAINTENANCE PROGRAM

Submitted By

The Ocean County Board of Chosen Freeholders | January 8, 2015

Approved By

The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection | December 30, 2015

Prepared By

The Ocean County Department of Planning

129 Hooper Avenue, P.O. Box 2191

Toms River, NJ 08754-2191

(732) 929-2054



SEPTIC MAINTENANCE PROGRAM

Component of the Ocean County Wastewater Management Plan

Submitted By

The Ocean County Department of Planning | December 22, 2017

Approved By

The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection | March 26, 2020

Prepared By

The Ocean County Department of Planning

129 Hooper Avenue, P.O. Box 2191

Toms River, NJ 08754-2191

(732) 929-2054





Table of Contents

- I. ISSDS INVENTORY 3**
 - CREATION OF CURRENT ISSDS INVENTORY 3
 - ACCESSING THE ISSDS INVENTORY 3
- II. CURRENT SEPTIC MANAGEMENT PRACTICES 4**
 - PRIORITY AREAS..... 4
 - PERMITTING PROCESS FOR ISSDSS 4
 - MAINTENANCE REQUIREMENTS FOR ISSDS OWNERS/OPERATORS 5
 - ADDITIONAL MUNICIPAL MAINTENANCE REQUIREMENTS..... 5
 - EDUCATION/OUTREACH ON PROPER MAINTENANCE 5
 - RECORD CREATION AND MAINTENANCE..... 5
 - RESPONSE ACTIONS TO COMPLAINTS..... 5
 - REMEDIAL ACTIONS REQUIRED FOR FAILING ISSDSS 5
 - REPORTING TO NJDEP 6
- III. PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS TO CURRENT SEPTIC MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AND PLAN TO COMPLETE ISSDS INVENTORY..... 7**
 - EXISTING BUT YET UNACCOUNTED-FOR ISSDSS 7
 - OTHER STRATEGIES TO AUGMENT/COMPLETE THE INVENTORY 7
 - IMPROVEMENTS TO TRACKING AND NOTIFICATION PROCESS 7
 - ADDITIONAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES 7
 - CHARTING FUTURE PROGRESS 8



I. ISSDS Inventory

This Septic Maintenance Program (SMP) was prepared in accordance with the New Jersey Water Quality Management (WQM) Planning Rules (N.J.A.C. 7:15), which were adopted by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) on November 7, 2016. As per N.J.A.C. 7:15-4.5(c)1vi, all designated Water Quality Management Planning Agencies are required to “demonstrate that areas to be served by individual subsurface disposal systems are subject to a mandatory maintenance program, such as an ordinance, which ensures that all individual subsurface disposal systems are inspected at a frequency to adequately determine if they are functioning properly.” The Ocean County Board of Chosen Freeholders is the designated Water Quality Management Planning Agency for Ocean County and those portions of Monmouth County which lie within the Metedeconk River Basin. The Ocean County Board of Chosen Freeholders has identified the Ocean County Department of Planning as the county agency charged with Wastewater Management Plan (WMP) preparation and maintenance.

On May 17, 2017, the NJDEP provided funding to the County of Ocean in the form of a federal grant for the purpose of developing a SMP. Also on May 17, 2017, the County of Ocean entered into an Intergovernmental Services Agreement (ISA) with the Ocean County Board of Health for the development of this SMP.

Creation of Current ISSDS Inventory

The Ocean County Health Department (OCHD), in cooperation with the Ocean County Department of Planning, has created an inventory of all individual subsurface disposal systems (ISSDSs) in Ocean County. While the installation of new ISSDSs is increasingly uncommon in Ocean County, septic systems are still prevalent in the more rural areas of the county, including but not limited to sections of Eagleswood, Jackson, Lakewood, Little Egg Harbor, and Manchester Townships. As the only Ocean County municipality not served by the Ocean County Utilities Authority (OCUA), all of Plumsted Township (outside of Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst) is currently on septic; this will continue unless and until a planned sewer treatment works is constructed in the New Egypt downtown area. Conversely, ISSDSs are less common in the more urbanized areas of the County, and several barrier island communities do not have any active septic systems. The efforts of Ocean County Health Department and the Ocean County Department of Planning have produced the first comprehensive inventory of the county’s ISSDSs.

The inventory in its present form includes a record for each of the approximately 30,000 ISSDSs in Ocean County. Each record contains all currently available data on the street address, block and lot, and relevant file number.

Accessing the ISSDS Inventory

Copies of the Ocean County ISSDS Inventory can be obtained from the Ocean County Board of Health. The entire inventory, in digital format, is available for official use upon request. Site-specific inquiries will be handled by the Ocean County Health Department on a case-by-case basis.

In the future, the OCHD will continue to update the inventory as new information is made available. Specific procedures for keeping the inventory’s records up to date are detailed in the following sections.



II. Current Septic Management Practices

The septic management practices now implemented by this SMP are multifarious. The following sections identify the procedures which are currently in place and will soon be enacted to ensure compliance with N.J.A.C. 7:15. Areas of specific concern are identified for prioritization of septic management efforts. The process by which new ISSDSs are permitted is also detailed. System maintenance requirements, as well as the procedures for updating the ISSDS inventory, keeping the public informed, responding to complaints and failures, and reporting to the NJDEP are also covered.

Priority Areas

There are presently three “priority areas” in Ocean County, in which there are a preponderance of failing ISSDSs. Each priority area is unique in its contributing factors, current status, and potential remedies. It should be noted that there are also probable areas of failing ISSDSs which are expected to be identified through execution of this Septic Management Plan.

The most crucial area of failing ISSDSs in the County is Lakewood Township. Due to the significant population growth, age of existing neighborhoods, and the use of existing structures for non-residential purposes, the amount of effluent actually generated per day often far exceeds the engineered capacity of era-appropriate ISSDS design. This area is under increasing pressure, and ISSDS waste overflows are frequent and pose a significant public health threat. While modern technologies are being incorporated more often to handle the waste volumes for newer structures, there are no near term remedies for existing stressed systems.

Another area of historically failing ISSDSs is the Pine Lake Park section of Manchester Township. Caused, in general, by the high density of residential systems, the age of construction, and outdated technology, an elevated amount of ISSDS repair permits have been filed in recent years. This area has undergone significant system repair and replacement, with modern technologies rarely utilized. Execution of this Septic Management Plan is expected to improve the long-term effectiveness of repaired systems such as these in the future.

Health Department complaint and ISSDS permit data have indicated that the area of Plumsted Township surrounding Oakford Lake and the downtown/Main Street area have long experienced ISSDS failure and overflow. This is caused by a dense concentration of older ISSDS construction in areas of high water tables. As the Township moves forward with plans to extend sanitary sewer facilities throughout the area, including the construction of a wastewater treatment facility, this area is expected to vastly improve in the near future.

Permitting Process for ISSDSs

As the local Administrative Authority for all of Ocean County except for the six municipalities that comprise Long Beach Island, the Ocean County Health Department provides all ISSDS design review, construction inspection, certification, and complaint investigation for ISSDSs within Ocean County. The only exception to this is Treatment Works Approvals, which are overseen by the NJDEP. As per Ocean County Health Department Ordinances 83-1 and 94-1, ISSDS permitting and construction is managed and administered consistently throughout each municipality, and fees are collected to offset the allocation of necessary resources.

ISSDS construction permits are filed and contain, at a minimum, soil logs, sealed engineered design of all system components, and all applicable local approvals. Wetlands documentation, Pinelands documentation, and local utility documentation are also necessary for review at times.

ISSDS repair permits are filed under emergent as well as routine conditions. Sealed engineering documents, site drawings, and permit documentation are required for approval, and are cross-referenced with existing files for any parcel applying for ISSDS repair. ISSDS alterations can be filed and permitted through similar means.

It should be noted that many areas of Ocean County are within Pinelands-regulated zones. ISSDSs in these areas often employ the use of advanced technologies. Approval is required by Pinelands authorities as well as the Ocean County Health Department.

Alternatives to standard ISSDS design are reviewed by the Ocean County Health Department for a number of reasons. These may include fitting fields into undersized lots, site conditions that do not allow standard technology, etc. These systems are approved on a case-by-case basis.



Maintenance Requirements for ISSDS Owners/Operators

Previously, correspondence to ISSDS owners/operators has not been completed on any regular schedule. With the implementation of this SMP, all owners/operators of properties with ISSDSs will be contacted with a letter containing standard operation and maintenance recommendations. The letter will also include a link to a newly created page on the OCHD website where users will find more in-depth information related to ISSDS basics and technical guidance.

Following the initial mailing, and through long-term execution of the SMP, triennial mailings will continue. Newly constructed and approved systems will be placed on the triennial schedule as well. Resources posted to the OCHD website will be reviewed and updated annually to ensure proper guidance and accurate information.

Additional Municipal Maintenance Requirements

There are no municipal or County maintenance requirements for functioning ISSDSs at this time. When reports of malfunctioning systems are received and verified by OCHD field staff, pump-outs and ISSDS repair work can be mandated. If warranted, ISSDS owners are issued Notices of Violation. Court action will then follow if corrective actions are not taken by the owners.

In Pinelands areas, the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP) requires a five-year warranty from when an alternate design system is first installed. The requirement does not apply to all new ISSDSs. The CMP also requires that the system have a renewable operation and maintenance agreement for the life of the system (N.J.A.C. 7:50-6.85b).

Education/Outreach on Proper Maintenance

To date, additional outreach and education programs have only been performed sporadically. As a part of this SMP—and currently in development—are frequently asked questions and answers posted to the OCHD website. Also, the OCHD will be recording videos explaining the permit submission and approval process. All of this information and media will be added to the OCHD website in the near future. The OCHD is also planning “Ask an Inspector” night programs to be hosted at government buildings as well as other community-based facilities.

Record Creation and Maintenance

A comprehensive inventory of all ISSDSs in Ocean County has not been compiled prior to this SMP. However, as part of this SMP, an editable inventory has been created. Future use of the inventory includes noting abandonments, adding new systems, and noting repairs and alterations to existing ISSDSs in Ocean County. The long-term goal of the inventory system is to create a database capable of tracking changes to inventory, as well as targeting areas with known ISSDS failures.

Response Actions to Complaints

All complaints received are investigated by OCHD field staff. All violations of public health regulations and ISSDS design and construction are enforced through issuance of Notices of Violation. OCHD staff order repairs, pump-outs, and alterations with reasonable deadlines. Failure of any responsible party to comply with a Notice of Violation is cited with the municipal court of the jurisdiction and court action follows.

Remedial Actions Required for Failing ISSDSs

After verifying a failing or malfunctioning system, a Notice of Violation is issued by the OCHD, remedial actions are outlined (ranging from pumping of a tank to redesign of a system), and a timetable is given for remedial actions to be taken. Failure of a system owner to act in accordance with the Notice of Violation leads to the signing of municipal summons and municipal court action.

Execution of this SMP and using the newly created inventory for reference is expected to lead to more effective remediation in the future. More and accurate information on system age and historic complaints and repairs provides a better understanding for the OCHD to recommend significant, long-term remedial actions when failing ISSDSs are verified.



Reporting to NJDEP

OCHD regularly communicates with the NJDEP, and in the future will report the number of systems installed, the number of failing systems, and the total number of systems in the County inventory in accordance with all applicable rules and regulations. With completion of the inventory and execution of this SMP, these data are expected to become more accurate over time as quality control measures are enhanced.

To date, OCHD staff have conferred with the NJDEP regarding issues and questions that arise during design and construction reviews. Policies are often agreed upon jointly and are executed by OCHD management after discussion with the NJDEP. Recent examples include basement ejector pump installation procedure, and how to handle oversight of these systems. OCHD regularly issues and receives referrals regarding the Treatment Works unit at NJDEP.



III. Proposed Improvements to Current Septic Management Practices and Plan to Complete ISSDS Inventory

The Ocean County ISSDS Inventory and the septic management practices it supports are intended to be continually reviewed and updated to maximize accuracy and efficacy. This section details the means by which this objective is to be pursued.

Existing But Yet Unaccounted-For ISSDSs

Community outreach in the form of public presentations and mailings are expected to identify systems that have been abandoned, as well as systems that are not currently known to OCHD. Cross-referencing of repair and alteration permits, complaint investigations, and sewer service area records will identify parcels that have no records in the OCHD filing system and will need to be added to the septic inventory.

Enhanced review of ISSDS permits in the future will include neighboring parcel reviews to determine non-sewered areas and the number of known systems. This will be used to ensure that unaccounted-for systems are added to the inventory and ISSDSs which are inactive are noted as such in the inventory.

Other Strategies to Augment/Complete the Inventory

While the inventory was in the form of a spreadsheet, data manipulation was limited. Ongoing conversion of the inventory from a spreadsheet format to a database will be a top priority. OCHD's intention is to create a database with a management tool that can be utilized to easily reference and link to complaints. Future data entry is expected to be far less rigorous than adding lines to a spreadsheet, making the inventory a more user-friendly, dependable tool.

Furthermore, the attribute fields, "date of installation or approximate age," "ISSDS type," "date of last known activity," "description of last known activity," "last inspection," and "last pump out" have been added to the inventory. The cells in these fields will be populated as development of the inventory continues. Additional attributes may be added to the database at the direction of the NJDEP and/or as conditions dictate.

Improvements to Tracking and Notification Process

The frequency of mailings is expected to increase in the future, as the newly created inventory is utilized to contact system owners and operators. Enhancing the suite of guidance documents and resources available on the OCHD website combined with mailings will far more effectively link ISSDS owners and operators to modern, vetted information.

Through execution of this SMP, communication between OCHD and municipal officials will be critical. Enhancing communication will lead to a more accurate inventory, inform OCHD of local planning changes, and create an environment where more effective strategies can be used when identifying trouble areas. More specifically, local officials will be able to report abandonments to the OCHD, refer areas where failing ISSDSs may be found, and better identify non-sewered areas. OCHD will, in turn, maintain a more accurate inventory, mandate more effective repairs for failing ISSDSs, and connect with system owners to provide more abundant and modern guidance for system management.

Additional Educational Opportunities

To further augment the effectiveness of current outreach efforts, the OCHD will host informational sessions for the general public at local and County facilities. The OCHD will enhance its suite of guidance documents available on its website and in mailings to system owners/operators and municipal officials. Outreach to non-governmental organizations will also be initiated. OCHD's current partnerships and relationships with local Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) will be used to schedule additional public meetings, where guidance can be presented and questions can be answered by OCHD staff. These current partners may include the Barnegat Bay Partnership, Clean Ocean Action, Save Barnegat Bay, and other organizations with which the County and OCHD already cooperate.



Charting Future Progress

With the creation of the new ISSDS inventory and execution of this SMP, estimates of ISSDSs per municipality are established. There remains a significant amount of work necessary to ensure that the inventory is accurate. Responses from mailings should be used to adjust the current estimates of active ISSDSs when received. Within the same time frame, updated resources and guidance pertaining to ISSDS maintenance and operation is to be posted on the OCHD website and made available to all ISSDS owners in the County.

Within two years of the effective date of this SMP, full conversion of the ISSDS inventory from spreadsheet format to a database is crucial. This will enable data entry, verification, report generation, and reference to occur more easily and quickly. This step may require securing an outside contractor to complete conversion. Also, within two years of SMP adoption, areas of frequently failing ISSDSs must be targeted and identified by the OCHD. This information will be used when mandating repairs for failing systems.