

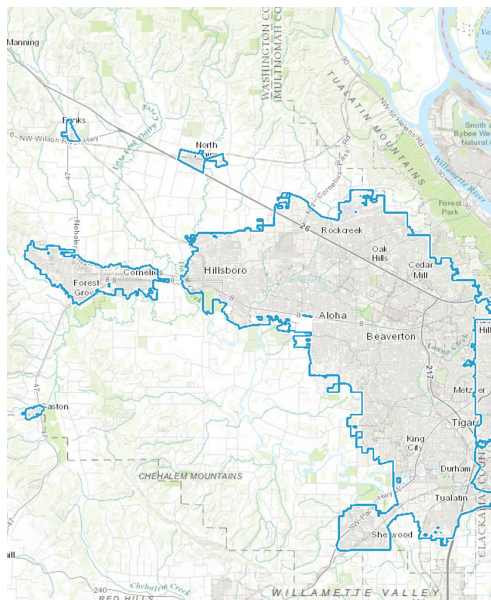
# SEPTIC-TO-SEWER



In urbanized Washington County, Clean Water Services manages the public sanitary sewer conveyance and treatment system. Most homes and businesses are connected to the public sewer system, but some properties that developed prior to current standards and were built with private onsite septic systems.

As properties redevelop or old septic systems fail, the owners of those properties are required to switch from septic to sewer. This requirement helps safeguard local streams and groundwater from contamination and protect the public from potential health hazards.

Property owners interested in connecting to the public system can visit the CWS website or contact Development Services staff to learn more about the location of public sewers. In the case of a property with a failing septic system, repair or replacement of the system may be permissible if the closest connection to the public sewer system is more than 300 feet from any portion of the property, and/or there are geographic and/or legal reasons that prevent the property from connection to the public sewer system.



Maps of the public sewer system can be found at:  
[cleanwaterservices.org/permits-development/resource-directory](https://www.cleanwaterservices.org/permits-development/resource-directory)

## Is my septic system failing?

These are terms you may hear from the Health Department or a qualified inspector:

- **Emergency (failing):** Tank contents are backing up in the house or yard and creating a health issue. Residents may need to bring in a portable toilet, or even relocate temporarily.
- **Non-emergency (failing):** The system fails inspection by the Health Department or a qualified septic tank inspector.
- **Non-emergency (not failing):** The system is old, and may be in need of repair, but passes inspection.

## How to pursue a geographic and/or legal exemption from connecting to public sewer:

1. Write a letter to CWS Development Services staff and provide documentation of one or more of the following barriers:
  - **Gravity** – your house is lower than the public system.
  - **Geography** – your house sits on one side of a wide ravine and the public system sits on the other.
  - **Legal** – there are one or more properties between you and the public system, and you have tried—without success—to get the necessary easement(s) to build a service lateral.
2. If your letter demonstrates that you cannot connect to the public sewer system, CWS will provide a Waiver of Remonstrance for you to sign. It will state that you agree that you will connect your property to the public sewer when or if it becomes accessible due to development, capital construction or a Local Improvement District (LID).
3. If a Waiver is granted, you will need to work with the Health Department and a contractor to get the proper repairs made to the septic system.



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## Roles and Responsibilities

Contact the Washington County Health Department for information about what to do if a septic system is failing, what repairs can be made, and how to decommission an old system.

Contact the Washington County Building Department for a plumbing permit for the new service lateral, and Washington County Operations & Maintenance for a right-of-way permit to connect the new lateral to the public system (if needed).

Contact Clean Water Services for permits to connect to the public sewer system.

- All applicants will need to complete a sensitive area pre-screen. Depending on the results, an applicant may also need a wetland delineation or further environmental assessment.
- New connections to the public system will need to pay System Development Charges, also known as Connection Charges.
- You will also need a line tap inspection, to ensure that the new lateral is connected to the mainline sewer correctly.
- An erosion control inspection is also required if construction will disturb more than 500 square feet.
- Once the property is connected, you'll begin receiving bi-monthly service bills from CWS.

The contractor you hire does the actual construction. This includes:

- Filling the tank with sand or other approved substance, or physically removing the tank.
- Disconnecting (cap or remove) any old laterals.
- Installing erosion control measures, if needed.
- Installing and connecting the new service lateral between mainline and house.

## CWS Resources

- Request a pre-design meeting: [cleanwaterservices.org/media/1808/pre-design-meeting-request-form.pdf](https://cleanwaterservices.org/media/1808/pre-design-meeting-request-form.pdf).
- Complete the sensitive area Pre-Screen Form: [cleanwaterservices.org/prescreen](https://cleanwaterservices.org/prescreen).
- Explore the CWS step-by-step permitting process: [cleanwaterservices.org/development](https://cleanwaterservices.org/development).
- Learn about installing a new lateral by reviewing the Sanitary/Storm Line Tap fact sheet: [cleanwaterservices.org/inspections](https://cleanwaterservices.org/inspections).

## Washington County Resources

- Contact Health and Human Services Department about repairing or decommissioning your septic system: [www.co.washington.or.us/HHS](http://www.co.washington.or.us/HHS) or 503.846.4402.
- Contact the Building Department about permits: [www.co.washington.or.us/building](http://www.co.washington.or.us/building) or 503.846.3470.
- Contact the Operations and Maintenance Division about right-of-way permits: [www.co.washington.or.us/LUT/Divisions/Operations](http://www.co.washington.or.us/LUT/Divisions/Operations).

Everything we do at Clean Water Services aims to protect public health while enhancing the natural environment of the Tualatin River Watershed.

  
**Clean Water Services**

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