



Small-Scale Wastewater Treatment Systems Study

This study is examining how small-scale community wastewater systems could alleviate challenges arising from the region's aging septic systems. We will identify potentially suitable locations for alternative systems, like Large Onsite Sewage Systems or Community Drainfields, and potential implementation barriers.

WHAT WE ARE DOING

This project will evaluate where and under what circumstances small-scale wastewater systems could be a preferred alternative to new or replacement septic systems. We will:

- Identify regulatory limiting factors for individual replacements and alternative systems.
- Conduct a spatial analysis to identify areas potentially suitable for alternative systems.
- Conduct a comparative analysis of treatment options to understand relative costs and benefits, and highlight important planning considerations.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Failing septic systems are a leading cause of fecal pollution that results in unsafe swimming beaches and shellfish bed closures. Sea level rise may cause future coastal septic system failures and limit replacement options.



Image Credit: Snohomish County Public Health

WHAT YOU CAN DO

We are interested in engaging with practitioners about aging septic systems and wastewater infrastructure transitions in your county. Please contact us if you would like to contribute.

ABOUT THE PUGET SOUND INSTITUTE

The University of Washington Puget Sound Institute supports planners and practitioners by providing data analysis, research, and communication to advance the science of Puget Sound recovery. This study builds upon an earlier [case study analysis of community wastewater transitions](#) we completed in 2025.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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