

**COLUMBIA COUNTY LAND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES**  
**COURTHOUSE**  
**ST. HELENS, OREGON 97051**

**SITE EVALUATION INFORMATION**

**NOTICE:**

- Permits are required prior to installation of a septic system. Zoning approval from the appropriate zoning agency (County or City) is required prior to obtaining a septic system construction permit
- An approved site evaluation is only a technical report. An approved site evaluation does not warrant that a building permit for a structure can or will be approved on the subject lot or parcel; any of the following may prevent the issuance of a building permit:
  1. Your lot or parcel may be too small to meet all the development requirements of the Zoning Ordinance (setbacks, spacing, etc.).
  2. Your lot or parcel may have a floodway, flood plain, wetland or some other natural restriction which would prevent building.
  3. Your lot or parcel may have road frontage or access problems.
  4. Your land may be only a tax lot, not a legal lot or parcel.
  5. There may be a conflict with a state or federal law, a Columbia County ordinance, or a Planning Commission, Board of County Commissioners or judicial decision.

**This list is not inclusive; there may be other impediments to building which are not included above. Please check with a County Land Use Planner prior to proceeding with site evaluation application.**

**PROCEDURE TO BE FOLLOWED:**

1. Complete the appropriate application form in full (Residential or Commercial depending on your proposal) and any other required exhibits and the required fee. Also include accurate directions to the property, the name of the nearest County road, and the property address on either side of the property.

Attach a tax lot map with the property outlined (this can be obtained from this office). Show proposed test pit location on this map and include the approximate distance of all test pits to at least two property lines. If pits are not visible from road, provide flags or directional signs to test pit site(s). Also identify the well location if present. Failure to clearly identify test pits and well location on your map and/or mark locations on-site will lead to delays in completion of the evaluation.

If the application is not completed with all exhibits and signed by the owner, or the owner's agent, it will be returned. Lot Evaluations do take 8-12 weeks to be completed, so plan accordingly.

2. Provide two (2) test holes on the property:
  - You do have the availability to schedule to meet with the Sanitarian onsite to dig the test pits in the location you are proposing; this does require flexibility with schedules and equipment. This is the preferred method; or,
  - If preparing the test pits prior to application, one test pit should be in the area to be used for the initial drainfield. The second test pit is used for confirmation and to represent the soils and terrain of the replacement area. Setbacks are applicable and should be considered. If the test pits fill with water, are prepared in an area that does not meet applicable setbacks, or are unstable, then additional test pits may have to be prepared which can result in delays. Pre-digging test pits is not recommended for this reason.
  - The test pits should be approximately three (3) feet wide by four (4) feet long and five (5) feet deep with a way for the sanitarian to get in and out of the pits (see Preparation Guide). These test pits should be at least 75 - 80 feet apart, but no more than 100 feet; staggering the test pits allows for

**(Please turn over for more information)**

consideration of a larger area. In general, if your land slopes at a uniform rate, you will need an area of about 80' x 100' for the initial and replacements drainfield(s). However, if the terrain is irregular or the slope of the land varies, a larger area will be necessary. Land slopes exceeding 30% will not be approved for a standard system. **Please note:** if the area being proposed for sewage disposal is overgrown with vegetation, then the area will need to be mowed or cleared so that the area can be accurately evaluated. The area where test pits are being prepared shall be native soil. Grading, filling, and other soil modifications process are prohibited.

3. The site will be visited by the staff Sanitarian to determine if it complies with the Department of Environmental Quality's minimum regulations pertaining to subsurface sewage and/or alternative sewage disposal systems. **If the site is denied** and sufficient area exists, additional test pits may be evaluated within 90 days of the initial site inspection without additional fees. After 90 days, new fees will be charged prior to any new evaluation.
4. A letter of favorable site evaluation will be issued if the site is approved. The letter will outline the specific requirements for construction of the system. This approval does not need to be renewed and is valid indefinitely unless certain and/or significant changes occur on the site. **Please note:** changes in technical requirements in Division 71 may not invalidate a site approval but may require design changes or the use of a different type of system. Future property line adjustments or partitions may void a site evaluation approval.

**When planning test pit locations, keep the following minimum setbacks in mind:**

**(1) DRAINLINES AND REPLACEMENT\* AREA MUST BE AT LEAST:**

100' from any water source (well, creek, spring, etc.), regardless of whether you plan to use this source.

50' from intermittent streams, drain tiles, etc.

25-50' from cut banks or escarpments (slopes >50%).

10' from property line, foundation or water lines.

**(2) THE SEPTIC TANK AND DISTRIBUTION UNIT\*\* MUST BE AT LEAST:**

50' from a well, creek, spring, etc.

50' from intermittent streams, drain tiles, etc.

10-25' from cut banks.

10' from escarpments.

5' from foundation of any building or property line.

\*The replacement area is the area needed for replacement whenever the original system fails.

\*\*The distribution unit includes any treatment unit (Sand Filter), any portion of the effluent sewer lines (solid pipe), pump, pressure line, distribution box, drop boxes.