

Septic Systems and Stream Crossings



State of Oregon
Department of
Environmental
Quality

Why do septic systems cross streams?

If your building location is on one side of a stream and your approved drainfield area is on the other side, you'll need to cross the stream with an effluent sewer pipe to send effluent from your septic tank to the drainfield.

What permits are required?

A permit from the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality is required to install any part of a septic system. Also, Oregon's Removal-Fill Law (Oregon Revised Statutes 196.795-990) requires people who plan to remove or fill material in waters of the state to obtain a permit from the Oregon Department of State Lands.

What activities need a Department of State Lands permit?

1. Projects requiring the removal or fill of 50 or more cubic yards of material in waters of the state
2. The removal or fill of any material in a stream designated as essential salmon habitat, regardless of the number of cubic yards affected
3. The removal or fill of any material from the bed and banks of scenic waterways regardless of the number of cubic yards affected.

If you're unsure if you need a permit from the Department of State Lands, visit the [department's website](#), where you can find a list of essential salmon habitat, a list of scenic waterways, or a list of resource coordinators who can help you. You can also contact them at 503-378-3805.

What conditions apply?

All permits include standard and special design and operating conditions that are intended to ensure the protection, conservation and best use of the state's water resources and prevent harm to fisheries and recreational uses of the waters. A common condition is that the project be conducted during the in-water work period established by the Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife. Visit the department's website to find a list of in-water work periods as well as a list of [contacts](#). Or contact them directly at 800-720-6339. The department provides comments on

most Department of State Lands removal-fill permits. Additional conditions may apply.

How long will the permit process take?

State law requires the Department of State Lands to determine whether an application for a joint removal-fill permit is complete within 40 days of receipt and to issue a decision within 90 days of that determination. However, in an emergency, the department can authorize work in advance verbally as soon as all necessary information about the project is obtained. Emergency authorizations are available only for very limited, unforeseen circumstances. Contact the department for more information as soon as you become aware of a problem or potential emergency.

DEQ cannot issue a septic system permit until your application is complete. If a stream crossing is involved, you must provide a copy of your Department of State Lands permit with your application for a septic system permit. An engineer may also be required to design the crossing. See procedures and criteria for installing a new septic system on DEQ's [webpage](#).

Once your application is complete, DEQ must issue your construction-installation permit within 20 days. Due to the limited time of in-water work periods, remember to plan in advance.

What if I want to cross over a stream using a bridge or other support?

Many factors must be considered when crossing over a stream using a bridge or other support, such as use of long-term structures, flooding events, freezing, and vandalism protection. The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife may have conditions for this type of crossing.

Alternative formats

Documents can be provided upon request in an alternate format for individuals with disabilities or in a language other than English for people with limited English skills. To request a document in another format or language, call DEQ in Portland at 503-229-5696, or toll-free in Oregon at 800-452-4011, ext. 5696; or email deqinfo@deq.state.or.us.

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