

Sanitation Client (SAN1000) Case Study

Client Level: Community

Failing Septic Systems

Windmaster is a neighborhood located south of the City of Hood River, Oregon. It is located on unincorporated County lands. A soil structure exists (clay) in the area, that impedes the flow of ground water. This causes surfacing ground water to occur in this area (especially during times of high precipitation). For 30 years, Hood River County (Health Department) has recognized that this area has had very frequent septic-system failure. It has been a contentious and evolving issue for many years.

Several individuals have been observed to have incorrectly installed septic systems that directly pollute surface waterways and ditches. Failing septic systems may lead to surfacing fecal material. Fecal material may contain human pathogens that lead to disease. Both people and animals may become contaminated and diseased. This creates a health risk for all people especially young children, the elderly and immune-compromised individuals. As well, this area may be a significant source of contamination for nearby Indian Creek. High levels of e-coli bacteria have been measured in this water body.

David Smith, Environmental Health Specialist has been assigned to head up a team to resolve these ongoing issues. Upon surveying the area, talking with Env Health colleagues, local residents, and local politicians, he coordinated actions aimed at long-term resolution of the problem.

Thanks to the good work of the Hood River County Health Department, a sewer district was formed allowing people in the area to connect to a community sewer system. Additionally, a fund has been established to ease the expense for homes to connect to the system. Most residents and businesses have complied with the sewer connection mandate. Some properties may need further enforcement action.