



**Questions submitted during the OWTS Manual Public Outreach of October 10, 2018  
Villa Chanticleer, Healdsburg**

- Q1. Can you define reserve area?
- A. The predefined area of land reserved for the installation of future OWTS, if and when the existing system fails.
- Q2. Does 50% of land encumbrance mean of the total land area?
- A. Yes.
- Q3. Our cabin is on a steep lot and the front of cabin is on a hill and the remainder is on stilts, and the leach field is under the house. Is that acceptable?
- A. If there is headroom and you are able to access the tank, then this seems acceptable.
- Q4. I would like to build an exterior covered porch which will cover 2 septic tank lids.
- A. Via the flow chart, because of the increased square footage, we would inspect to ensure the tanks were accessible.
- Q5. Does the reserve include the footprint (referencing the structure referred to in Q3)?
- A. Because cabin is in the air, does that include the reserve, could access tank and dispersal field
- Q6. If you wanted to add on square footage, but not bedrooms, what is required?
- A. Via the flowchart, no flow increase, square footage increase. We would look at land constraint then evaluate the septic areas to confirm the septic tank and dispersal areas are not impacted.
- Q7. Who confirms land encumbrance?
- A. The site map for a building permit should reveal structures, and we can also check our records.
- Q8. Under the new system if you are adding a bedroom, not increasing the flow or square footage, your existing system would need to be evaluated to determine if it has the capacity. If it does then, the soils would need to be evaluated.
- A. Under the proposed policy, it may not be required. But would need to confirm that you current system has the capacity. If it does, then the soils would be evaluated.
- Q9. Who determines the capacity?
- A. A Civil Engineer or REHS.
- Q10. How is flow increase determined?
- A. In a residential setting it is the number of bedrooms.



- Q11. My home was built in 1956, has an old kitchen, old bathrooms and I want to remodel the kitchen and 2 bathrooms, with a non-conforming well and septic system.
- A. We size based on bedrooms, there may be more flow, but you are installing low flow fixtures. If there is an existing system, and you are not increasing the flow or square footage, then no.
- Q12. 150 gpd/bedroom. Any discussion to reduce flow given 2 gal/flush and water saving fixtures?
- A. This topic is up for discussion, and possibly trading credits for low flow devices etc.
- Q13. What about the oxygenation system, Pirana for example-are they approved and do they work effectively?
- A. Pirana is not an approved system, but it is an addition. We do not have data on their performance, but would consider.
- Q14. Please review the issue of reserve field rules.
- A. Reserve is in case system fails and you need to use the area. 1971 and earlier required 100% expansion area, and after that that date it is 200%.
- Q15. Has anyone ever considered bringing city septic/sewer system into Fitch Mtn.?
- A. Not everyone would like this as some already have systems. Because of the fires, Larkfield / Wikiup areas have come up with some innovative and new financing options, allowing them to pay for their connection when they are ready. This is constantly a discussion we have with the City, but is a substantial undertaking.
- Q16. Are there plans in place to locate failing systems? For example, inspect properties to locate saturated soils and contamination sources?
- A. Not from the County. We would respond to a complaint.
- Q17. Under the "Permit Types" sheet where it says "Permit Exempt", what does that mean?
- A. There are certain items that may be replaced without a permit such as valve distribution boxes, meaning they are exempt from a permit.
- Q18. I want to know what to do if my house was built in 1930 and is only on a ½ acre lot with original septic tank original under 6 inches of concrete directly under the house. There is no way to get to it without tearing concrete out. There would not be room for new required system.
- A. If you are living in the home with no failing system, then okay. If we receive report of failure, or you wish to upgrade, then we must respond.
- Q19. Will proposed questionnaire generated to property owners by the Water Board prompt formal inquiries by the State to those property owners once those owners have answered them and in what time frame can property owners expect these questionnaires to arrive?
- A. Outreach will probably be phased because of the number. There are tens of thousands of these properties. Might take a while to get to you in the form of a letter telling you when we need the information back from you.

- Q20. Who is expected to qualify for / benefit from the pending grants/loan program? Is assistance going to be based on income levels, for example, or will help be available for all property owners?
- A. The State is offering grants for disadvantaged communities to do design work. If that works out, then it may be used for construction. The first area this is being used in is Monte Rio. Unfortunately, Healdsburg does not qualify as “disadvantaged”. We will learn from the exercise and replicate funds. The County is considering the possibility of using the PACE program (previously used for solar panels). In addition to grant funds, there is also the State revolving fund, and the possibility of low interest loans via government. A program such as this, would be administered by the Water Agency.
- Q21. Residential building we have existing 3 bedroom approved permit Sonoma county system designed for a 3 bedroom permit. Current residence only has 2 bedrooms and we want to add third bedroom. We will not exceed 50% land encumbrance Is third bedroom authorized under permit? Is it necessary to go through septic review in this scenario? If so, what is review process?
- A. Following the flowchart, you have a 2 bedroom house but a 3 bedroom septic system, if the total number of bedrooms equals the septic system capacity, we would look at the records, you would fall out of the process for septic review.
- Q22. Are all properties along the river going to be inspected in the next few months? Can we make specific appointments and dates?
- A. No and Yes
- Q23. Are OWTS upgrades required for all properties or just those requesting permits for other property improvements?
- A. Again, only if you increase the flow, apply for a building permit, or we receive a complaint for a failing system.
- Q24. Are there any provisions for financial assistance for the required OWTS upgrades?
- A. See A20
- Q26. Define separation of groundwater.
- A. We want to determine the elevation to groundwater. We want a minimum of 2 feet from the bottom of the trench to the elevation for groundwater so that the soil has the ability to treat the waste before it hits the groundwater. These determinations are only required for properties on a slope greater than 5%.
- Q27. Why are shared systems prohibited, and why not studied?
- A. They are not, and they are being studied. Sea Ranch is a good example. What does County authorization mean? It is a septic permit.
- Q28. Might the adoption of the TMDL require retroactive changes to existing onsite septic systems?
- A. Only if the system is failing or you have a cesspool and your system is not hydraulically overloaded, you are fine.

- Q29. I would like to personally ask a question regarding the graywater effluent TMDL.
- A. It seems the County is not giving enough attention these systems. We really are and there are non-profit that we need to promote. The Daily Axe can provide information and assistance.
- Q30. We lost our home on Riebli Road in the fire. Original home 1,400 square feet and the proposed rebuild is 2,000. Septic is 1,500 gallons, and leach line was damaged by FEMA in clearing. Can I still use existing septic and dig a new leach line?
- A. We want you in your home as soon as possible and suggest you talk to us after this meeting or come in to see us.
- Q31. Received a permit to upgrade my septic from a Class 3 to a Class 2 in 2017. How long is the permit good, and when I go to put in the new system, will there be any charges that I will incur? What if I do not have a reserve area?
- A. With the exception of well permits, our permits are good for 3 years. If we have not discussed a reserve area when the permit was issued, go construct your system. ....
- Q32. We have a non-conforming system with tank. We got a findings report in May. Does that findings report allow us to add 640 square and a reroof without further testing?
- A. 640 was the threshold in our current system and has been replaced with this manual. The class 3 would get you up to 640 and 50% of the exterior walls. You could build a minor addition.
- Q33. How is the exterior wall calculated for a 2 story house?
- A. The upstairs and downstairs are one wall.
- Q34. Tell us again what APMP stands for?
- A. Advanced Protection Management Program.
- Q35. How is the river bank edge determined?
- A. Top of bank (if visible), otherwise use a mathematical model.
- Q36. Our system is vested for 3 years. Can it be vested for more years?
- A. Technically you can re-vest an approved system not renew it. When you apply we would look at the current standards. When that is approved you can apply for the vesting certificate. Within the next 3 years you can apply for the septic system. After 3 years, you wish to re-vest, but you can submit the same design that was previously approved, under the current standards. You can get it vested again that way over and over. We would review the site confirming that there are no changes that would affect your design.
- Q37. Does a building permit stop the clock on vesting?
- A. No.
- Q38. Once we have our permits, how long do we have to build?
- A. The vesting certificate and building permit do not have much to do with each other. The OWTS Manual policies offer more flexibility. How long to build septic permit within under vesting

certificate you have 3 years to apply for septic permit. For building permit much more leniency if septic installed within 20 years.

- Q39. If we live within 600 feet of the river, are cesspools are going to have to be replaced? Is Regional Water Quality Control Board (not the County) going to inspect properties looking for cesspools and/or failing systems?
- A. The TMDL is drafted that if you are not in compliance within the APMP area, and if your parcel touches a line that is 600 feet away from the Russian River or a tributary.(most parcels in Fitch Mtn. are within the APMP). We will be going through a process to find out what kind of system you have. If you have a cesspool which is not allowed, we will ask you to contact the County to find some corrective action to upgrade and make it compliant with the TMDL.  
[www.waterboards.ca.gov/northcoast/](http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/northcoast/)
- Q40. How long do we have to comply?
- A. It depends how far your system is from the watercourse. It could be 5 years, 10 years for financial hardship, or more.
- Q41. For properties in the APMP are you expecting pretreatment systems will be required?
- A. The most recent draft will require supplement treatment or if your parcel can provide a code compliant system we would allow that. But many places near the water will not support that type of system.
- Q42. Define cesspool.
- A. A holding tank or pit in the ground for collection and storage of feces, sludge and household waste.
- Q43. If you have a cesspool can you just add leach lines?
- A. It resembles a seepage pit but they are more than a hole in the ground. That same fix would not work for a cesspool.
- Q44. I don't think the question (#28) regarding the regulations produced by the Water Quality Control Board being possibly retroactively changing the County's regulations has been answered. So if the County adopts theirs first, and then the State for instance.
- A. It's about 4-6 months for the TMDL to be effective. Then 6 months to gather information from you. If it complies with the TMDL then you are fine, we will not look at what you had, but what you currently have.
- Q45. If you are more than 600 feet from the river will you get the questionnaire?
- Only if you are within the APMP area.
- Q46. Who qualifies for assistance and loan programs?
- B. See Q20