



Richland County Health Department

Property Owner's Guide to Getting a Septic System Permit

GETTING STARTED:

The process for getting a septic permit is largely dependent on:

1. The size of your property
2. When and how your parcel was created.
3. Is the permit for a replacement system, repair, or upgrade

Parcels 20 acres or larger

If your property is 20 acres or more, you will need a satisfactory site evaluation before we can issue you a permit. (See the Site Evaluation section for more detailed information.)

Parcels less than 20 acres

If your property is less than 20 acres, you will need either a:

1. Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) subdivision approval document, or
2. Satisfactory site evaluation.

Which one of these applies depends on when and how your parcel was created. Most parcels are either part of a subdivision or certificate of survey. However, there are also some older parcels which were divided using meets and bounds or other descriptive methods. The best way to start is to figure out whether your parcel has a DEQ approval.

- **DEQ approval document exists**

Many subdivisions and certificates of survey have gone through the subdivision review process and have been issued an approval document by DEQ. We have copies of the DEQ approval documents at our office. They are also available at the Clerk and Recorder's office or you can contact DEQ. Unfortunately, they are not currently available on the internet.

If a DEQ approval document exists for your parcel, you must develop it as outlined in the approval. Approvals typically designate where your well and septic system must be located and limit the number of dwellings or amount of commercial development that can occur on the site. If you want to change where you want the well and septic system, you will likely have to go through a Site Modification process. If you want to change the type of usage or number of allowed dwellings you will have to go back through the DEQ subdivision review process. Depending on the changes, an abbreviated subdivision application may be possible.

- **No DEQ approval document exists for the parcel**

If no DEQ approval document exists for your parcel, you have to figure out when and how the parcel was created:

Subdivision

- If it's part of a subdivision created before 1973, a site evaluation is needed.
- If it's part of a subdivision created after 1973, you'll have to go through DEQ's subdivision process to see if the parcel can be developed. The parcel has to meet all current requirements.

Certificate of Survey (COS)

- If the parcel was part of a certificate of survey, contains 5 or more acres and was created before 1973, a site evaluation is required.
- If the parcel was part of a certificate of survey, contains 10 or more acres and was created before 1975, a site evaluation is required.
- If the parcel is part of a certificate of survey and contains at least 20 acres, a site evaluation is required.

Some parcels are created by using exemptions that restrict their use. Depending on the exemption, you might need to go through DEQ's subdivision review process. A purpose statement will be on the plat on file at the Clerk and Recorder's office.

Older Parcels

Older parcels that were created before DEQ sanitation regulations existed (1973) usually need to have a satisfactory site evaluation completed before a septic permit can be issued. However, it is important to note that some old parcels (especially small ones or those in or near the floodplain) may not meet the current requirements for obtaining a septic permit.

Important Note:

There are plenty of parcels that were created without going through DEQ's subdivision review process that may not be able to have a septic system on them at all. Parcels that cannot meet the requirements for water and septic and may not be able to be developed.

Need Help?

Because there are so many ways parcels can be created, this can be a rather confusing and daunting process. We are happy to help you determine which process you will need to go through to see if you can get a septic permit for your parcel. To do this, we need you to bring in your legal description including:

- Subdivision Name or COS number,
- Township, Range and Section and/or geocode.
- Site plan showing your house, septic and well location. (A more detailed site plan is required at the time of septic permit application.)

The Sanitarians Office will not assess the development potential of a property. For that, you'll need a consultant. We only evaluate a specific location based on your development proposal.

SITE EVALUATIONS

Site evaluations can be performed by the Sanitarian, Professional Engineers and others who are certified by the Department.

At a minimum, site evaluations include:

1. For replacements/repairs/upgrades, a file search for an existing permit with the Sanitarians Office.
2. Assessing soils. This can be accomplished by reviewing NRCS soils data or test pit documentation. (Note, the Sanitarian's Office does not conduct soil pit testing. This must be done by a professional engineer or consultant and is at the discretion of the Sanitarian's Office.)
3. Looking at the physical conditions of the site
4. Checking distances from surface water, floodplain and existing wells and septic systems. (The latter sometimes requires knocking on your neighbor's doors. The Sanitarian's Office will

Identify properties we have questions about, and may require you to do the leg work to figure out where neighboring wells and septic systems are located.)

Site evaluations may also include:

1. Deciding whether groundwater monitoring is needed
2. Assessing floodplain proximity
3. Hydrogeological or Non-degradation analysis

APPLYING FOR THE PERMIT

1. Completely fill out the application. If required information is missing, it will take longer for your permit to be issued.
2. Provide an accurate site plan. This is very important. It does not have to be drawn by an engineer or architect, but it does need to correctly show the property boundaries and everything on the list below. It needs to either be drawn to scale (with the scale identified) OR enough measurements need to be included to show where everything is located.
 - a. If your property was created with a DEQ approved site plan, you must place your well and septic system as shown on the approved site plan.
 - b. If there is a reason that the well and septic system cannot be placed as shown on the approved site plan, you may be required to obtain a Site Modification through our Department for approval of the new location(s).
3. Provide information regarding:
 - The number of bedrooms in the home, OR
 - The number of people that will be utilizing the facilities on a daily basis (A shop or business, for example)
 - The number of buildings that will be connected to the septic system.
4. Submit required application fee & your completed application. We accept applications in person weekdays between 8 am. and 5 pm. or via email. Go to <http://richland.org/> for physical and email addresses.
5. Pay the permit fee(s).
6. Have the system installed and inspected. Remember a certified installer or the landowner must be the one to install the system and must have a copy of the permit on site. The permit is not finalized until we have inspected the installation. Copies of all permit documentation will be kept on file at the Health Department and a copy will be mailed to you.

Required elements of a site plan:

- A. Property lines
- B. Existing and proposed buildings
- C. Existing and proposed water supplies
- D. Existing and proposed septic systems
- E. Nearby floodplain or floodprone areas
- F. Roads and driveways
- G. Nearby surface water, including irrigation ditches, ponds, streams, rivers, etc.
- H. Neighboring wells and septic systems within 100 feet of your property boundaries
- I. No build zones (if applicable)

Please include distances, dimensions, number of bedrooms or units served, connection points, right-of-ways, and any other pertinent information.

Site Plans for Septic Permits

Site plans can, but don't have to be drawn by a professional engineer or architect. A good site plan shows all the relevant features listed on the septic application. If the site plan is not drawn to scale, enough measurements should be given to accurately depict where everything is on the property.

Example of an adequate site plan:



Example of an inadequate site plan:

A site plan is not adequate if it does not show the property boundaries, nearby surface water, neighboring wells and septic, floodplain and other relevant features.

