



MEMORANDUM

TO: Deschutes County Board of Commissioners
Nick Lelack, County Administrator

FROM: Peter Gutowsky, CDD Director
Sherri Pinner, Sr. Management Analyst

DATE: December 2, 2024

SUBJECT: Community Development Onsite Wastewater Staffing Request

I. SUMMARY

The purpose of this memorandum is to request the addition of one (1) full-time regular position in the Onsite Wastewater Division (OWW) to perform investigation of environmental issues and inspections of onsite wastewater systems. During the FY 25 budget process, the Community Development Department (CDD) removed two (2) unfilled full-time regular positions from the onsite wastewater team, one (1) onsite wastewater specialist and one (1) administrative assistant. Unfilled positions were removed to align staffing with lower permitting volumes and concerns with financial stability. However, actual permitting volumes have experienced an increase in applications submitted and corresponding inspections resulting in longer permit issuance turn-around times.

Specifically, CDD proposes to:

- Add one (1) full time regular onsite wastewater specialist (OWWI or OWW II) to ensure continuity in investigation of environmental issues, permit issuance and inspections of onsite wastewater systems. The new FTE is critical to providing continuity of business operations and investigation and inspection coverage. Both site evaluations received, and septic permits issued have increased.

II. SITE EVALUATION APPLICATIONS RECEIVED, SEPTIC PERMITS ISSUED AND NEW SYSTEM PERMIT ISSUANCE TURN-AROUND

Following a two-year period of declining application submissions, CDD is seeing an application volume increase. Currently, site evaluations received are 24% higher than last calendar year and septic permits issued are 29% higher than last calendar year. The performance measure goal of 12 days to issue a new system permit was last met in spring 2024 and is currently averaging 19 days.

Figure 1 highlights onsite wastewater site evaluation applications received between January and October for the past 10 years.

Figure 1 - Onsite Wastewater Site Evaluation Applications Received

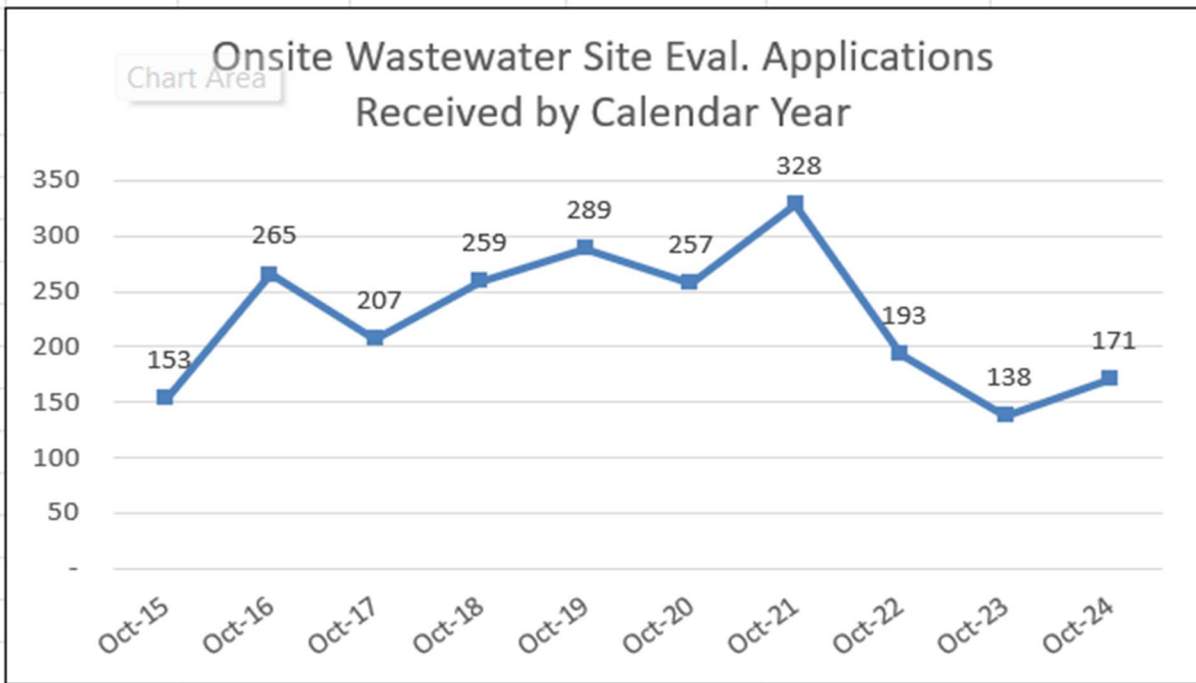


Figure 2 highlights onsite wastewater permits issued between January and October for the past 10 years.

Figure 2 - Onsite Wastewater Permits Issued

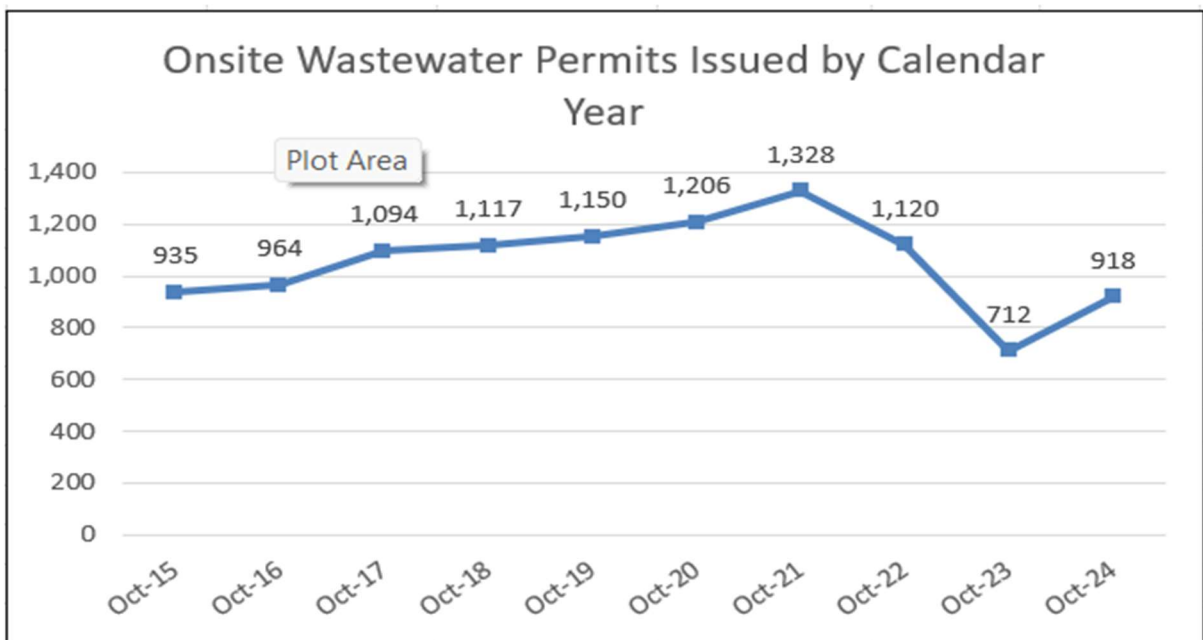
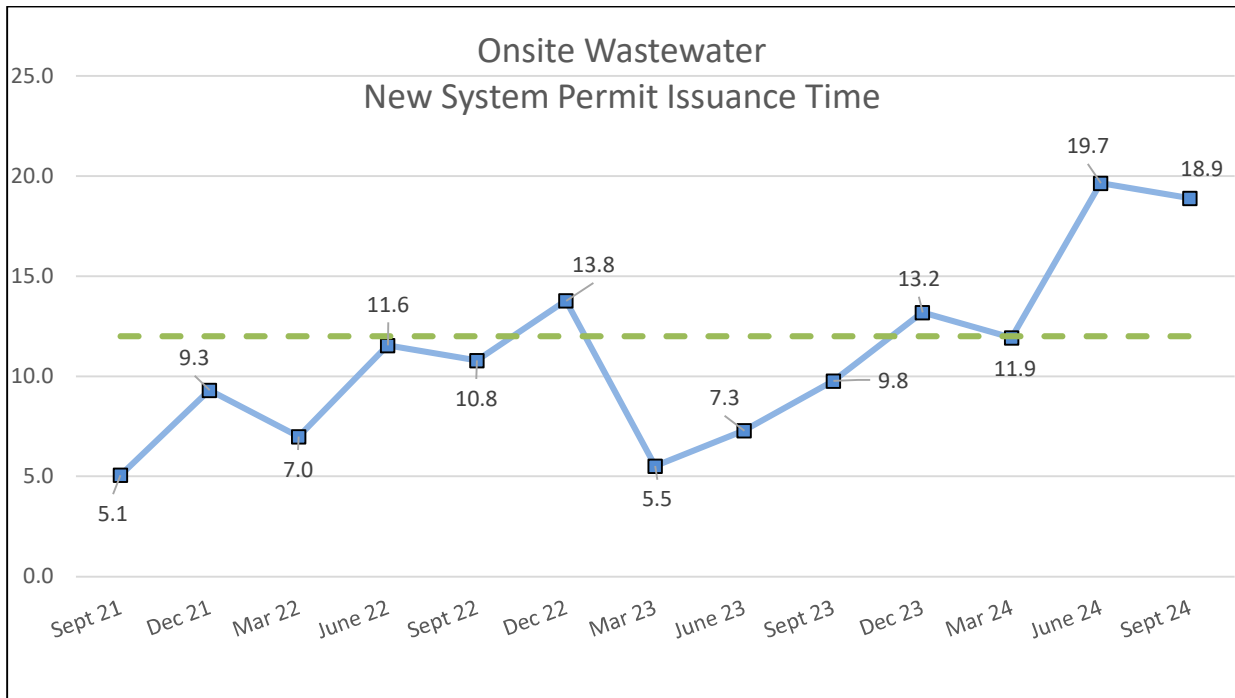


Figure 3 highlights onsite wastewater new system permit issuance goal of 12 days or less for quarters ended September 2021 through September 2024.

Figure 3 – Onsite Wastewater New System Issuance Time



Challenges

- CDD’s performance measure for new system issuance within 12 days of submission of a completed application was last met during spring 2024. The current fully staffed team of three (3) full time regular specialist, has issued new systems within an average of 19 days over the last six (6) months.
- Assignment of field duties by area location within a large geographic area.
- Increased email and phone inquiries.
- Re-assigning and cross-training onsite wastewater specialist on administrative tasks, including assigned hours for front counter customer service.
- Historically, recruitment for an onsite wastewater specialist position can be lengthy.
- Applicants may need additional training and certifications, which can take several years to obtain.

III. FINANCIAL IMPACT

Onsite wastewater fees and if necessary, Reserve Fund 300, can fully fund the OWW specialist position. The fully loaded annual rate range is approximately \$111,500 to \$124,000 with an additional expense of \$3,000 for computers and field tools. CDD estimates a \$30,000 reduction to its vehicle replacement balance for the purchase of a new vehicle.

IV. BOARD DIRECTION

- Approve/deny the addition of one (1) full time regular OWW specialist.