



SNOWY MONARO
REGIONAL COUNCIL

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On-Site Sewage Management Strategy



Record of Versions

Date Published	Reason for Amendments	Resolution	Author/Document Owner
21 June 2018		236/18	Env Officer OSSM

Uncontrolled document when printed. Please refer to intranet for controlled document

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Snowy Monaro Regional Council located in in the Southern Tablelands region of New South Wales and spans over 15162sqkm. Over 20,000 people live work and play in this area. The council area consists of over 14008 rate able properties and there are over 4500 identified On-Site Sewage Managements (OSSM) systems.

Recent research suggests around 70% of all on-site sewage management systems in New South Wales fail to meet health and environmental protection standards. As a result of the risks posed to public health and the environment by on-site sewage management systems, the New South Wales State Government requires that Council approval be sought by operators of these systems, and that Council provides supervision of the system operation.

The council area is supported by the Murrumbidgee and Snowy catchments. The Murrumbidgee catchment supports towns including Bredbo, Cooma and Michelago and the Snowy catchment supports towns including Bombala, Dalgety, Delegate and Jindabyne. The preservation and protection of these catchment areas are paramount and a major contributing factor in the formulation of this strategy.

1.2. Plan Status

This plan applies to all land within the Snowy Monaro Local Government Area that is not capable of being connected to the reticulated sewerage system of Council.

1.3. Purpose

The purpose of the Snowy Monaro Regional Council On-Site Sewage Management Plan is to enhance the management of on-site sewage management systems within our Local Government Area. The plan will provide for a reduction in the incidence of ineffective and failing systems, by implementing regular monitoring to ensure early detection and remediation of such systems.

The aim of this policy is to provide guidance for council when receiving applications, clarify the stages and related documents required and explain the on-going monitoring of systems once installed.

1.4. Objectives

The objectives of this strategy is to provide a framework to:

- Ensure transparency, consistency and fairness in the manner in which council deals with OSSM;
- Assess and regulate the design, installation and operation of OSSM systems in the Snowy Monaro Local Government Area
- Enhance and protect the environment and public health from potential OSSM impacts.
- Promote awareness of the on-going requirements with respect to operating an OSSM.

1.5. Goals

Council's goal is to work together with the community, developers and service agents to ensure well managed and efficiently performing, on-site sewage systems, through correct installation, regular monitoring and education.

To achieve Council's goal the following actions will be taken:

- Council will maintain a database of all existing on-site sewage systems,
- Council's development standards will be reviewed and approval criteria for subdivisions and residential building will ensure that provision is made for the most appropriate, sustainable, on-site sewage management or reticulated effluent disposal when residential development occurs in non-sewered areas to ensure that the impacts of such devices on the environment and public health is minimized,
- Council will ensure that all land application areas comply with environmental and health protection standards and council's operating requirements, and
- Regular monitoring by Council of high risk systems, and continual monitoring of other risk categories,
- To map and maintain details of soil and site conditions and suitability for on-site sewage management systems,
- To adopt a partnership approach with householders and service agents to support continual improvement of on-site sewage management systems,
- To provide education and information for operators of on-site sewage management systems

2. Related Legislation and Guidelines

2.1. Legislation

- [Local Government Act 1993](#)
- [Local Government \(General\) Regulation 2005](#)
- [Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979](#)
- [Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2000](#)
- [Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997](#)

2.2. Standards and Guidelines

- AS/NZS 1546:1-3 On-site domestic wastewater treatment units
- AS/NZS 1547:2012 On-site domestic wastewater management
- AS/NZS 3500:2012 Plumbing and Drainage
- Plumbing Code of Australia 2016
- [Environmental & Health Protection Guidelines: On-site sewage management for single households \(the 'Silver Book'\), NSW Department of Local Government, 1998](#)
- [NSW Guidelines for Greywater Reuse in Sewered, Single Household Residential Premises, NSW Department of Energy, Utilities and Sustainability, 2008](#)

3. Requirements for Application and Approvals

3.1. Subdivision or Rezoning

An on-site effluent disposal (land capability assessment) report prepared by a geotechnical engineer, soil geologist, soil scientist or other suitably qualified and competent person, experienced in on-site effluent disposal, shall accompany an application to subdivide or rezone in un-sewered areas.

The scale of information contained in a land capability assessment may vary, depending on the size and nature of the proposed development. The land capability assessment is a document written in a report format and contains sufficient details for Council to make an informed decision about the proposal.

The land capability assessment report shall provide the following:

- A site assessment of the subject property and soil capabilities on its suitability for the disposal of effluent on each of the proposed allotments that make up the subdivision. Hydraulic loading, wet weather storage, water and nutrient balance shall be included in the calculations. Calculations are to be included in the report.
- Soil test results in accordance with The Environment and Protection Guidelines 1998 - On-Site Sewage Management for Single Households and AS/NZS 1547:2012 for each allotment from the registered NATA laboratory used to test the soil.
- Mitigation measures where moderate or major limitations are identified within the soil parameters.

3.2. Approval to Install an On-Site Sewage Management System

Installation, construction or alteration of a waste treatment device or a human waste storage facility requires approval in accordance with the Local Government Act 1993 (Item 5 of Part C) of the Table to Section 68.

Applications to install new on-site sewage management systems in the Snowy Monaro Regional Council area shall be completed on Council's prescribed form and be accompanied by the following and the prescribed fee in accordance with Councils fees and charges.

3.2.1. Site and Soil Assessment Report

The report is to be prepared by an experienced and appropriately qualified wastewater consultant and in accordance with The Environment Protection Guidelines 1998 – On-Site Sewage Management for Single Households and AS/NZS 1547:2012.

The report shall provide or recommend for the following:

- A detailed site and soil assessment which takes into account the climate, topography, geology, hydrology and vegetation.

- Soil test results in accordance with The Environment and Protection Guidelines 1998 - On-Site Sewage Management for Single Households and AS/NZS 1547:2012 for each soil test required. Copies of NATA registered laboratory test results are to be provided with the report.
- The most appropriate on-site sewage management facility to accommodate daily wastewater flows.
- The location and size, including dimensions of the most appropriate type of land application system.
- Mitigation measures where moderate or major limitations are identified within the soil parameters.

3.2.2. Site Plan

A site plan is to be provided with each new installation application showing the following:

- Drawn to a suitable scale.
- Distances of buildings and other structures from all boundaries.
- List all features within The Environment and Protection Guidelines 1998 - On-Site Sewage Management for Single Households and AS/NZS 1547:2012 to the set buffer distances.
- The position of on-site sewage system.
- The position of all drainage lines.
- The position and size of the land application area.

3.2.3. Manufacturers Specifications and Accreditation Certificate

Under the provisions of Clauses 40 and 41, Local Government (General) Regulation 2005, a local council must not approve of the installation of certain sewage management facilities unless they have been accredited by the NSW Department of Health. This is the only statutory role of NSW Health in on-site single domestic wastewater management.

The types of sewage management facilities to which accreditation applies include:

- | | |
|--|---|
| ▪ Septic tanks | ▪ Greywater treatment systems |
| ▪ Collection well | ▪ Wet and Dry Composting and incinerating toilets available for purchase by retail. |
| ▪ Aerated wastewater treatment systems | |

A full list is detailed in Clause 40 of the above regulation and only includes sewage management facilities which treat sewage of a domestic nature from premises occupied by a maximum of 10 persons or where the average daily flow of sewage is less than 2000 litres.

Current Register of Accredited Sewage Management Systems can be found at www.health.nsw.gov.au.

Accredited sewage management facilities are required to provide the following prior to initial operating approval being issued:

- Full specifications of the on-site sewage management system to be installed.
- A copy of the current Certificate of Accreditation from the NSW Health Department.

Buffer Distances for Effluent Disposal Areas

Feature	Buffer Distances (m)							
	Drip/Trickle Irrigation		Spray Irrigation		Subsurface Irrigation		Absorption System	
	Upslope	Downslope	Upslope	Downslope	Upslope	Downslope	Upslope	Downslope
Dwelling	6	3	15	15	6	3	6	3
Driveway	6	3	6	3	6	3	6	3
Path	6	3	3	3	6	3	6	3
Pool	6	3	6	6	6	3	6	3
Permanent Waters	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Intermittent water, Dam	40	40	40	40	40	40	40	40
Property Boundary	6	3	6	3	6	3	12	3
Domestic Bore	250	250	250	250	250	250	250	250

3.3. Approval to Operate an On-site Sewage Management System

An Approval to Operate will only be issued, where the installation and operation complies with s68 of the *Local Government Act 1993* and the objectives of this strategy, therefore Council must be consulted prior to installation and approval obtained.

3.3.1. Existing Systems

To implement the approvals process:

- Audit the established OSSM databases to establish change of ownership and change of land details if subdivision has occurred.
- Complete a desktop study to identify any existing OSSM which do not appear on a database. Application forms to be sent to all identified owners.
- Complete a desktop audit to determine risk category for each application and determine how long the approval is valid for based on risk category.
- Once an application is received by Council, applicants are entitled to continue to operate their system until the application is finally determined, at which time the notice of the determination will be issued.
- The desktop audit of the applications received will assist in developing the inspection program based on potential or actual risk to public health and the environment.
- Approvals will be established/renewed.

3.3.2. New Applications

New applications for an Approval to Operate can be applied for in two different situations.

1. When a new development has occurred and a new on-site sewage management system has been installed. An Approval to Operate an on-site sewage management application shall be applied for as part of an Interim/Final Occupancy Certificate.
2. When a change of ownership of land has occurred. The Approval to Operate is issued to the operator/owner of the property and does not run with the land. New landowners are required to obtain their own Approval to Operate irrespective of whether the previous owner had an Approval to Operate or not.

The fee for an application for an Approval to Operate is available from Councils – Fees and Charges.

3.3.3. Renewal of Approval with Transfer of Title

Transfer of Ownership

- Title transfers and is updated in Council's property system on a regular basis.
- The Public Health and Environment section will be notified of all transfers by the Rates department monthly.
- New owners to be forwarded an Application for an Approval to Operate an On-Site Sewage Management System together with relevant information for new owners.
- Applications to be returned within 28 days of receipt.

The regulation provides that a person, who purchases land, a period of three months from the date on which the property is transferred to obtain their own Approval to Operate from Council. Additionally, a person who purchases (or otherwise acquires) land on which an on-site sewage management system is installed, applies for an approval within 28 days from the transfer of title, they may continue to operate the system until such time as the application has been processed.

4. **Monitoring Program**

Council is required to implement a monitoring program of existing systems and ensures these systems meet the environmental and health performance objectives set out in this strategy and in the Environmental Health and Protection Guidelines. This program also involves monitoring service documentation and on-site inspections.

At present there are approximately 4300 on-site sewage management systems in the Snowy Monaro Regional Council local government area. To carry out effective and ongoing inspections of this number of systems Council shall classify all systems into risk categories. Inspections are to be carried out at an interval appropriate to the individual systems risk assessment and operational status.

4.1. Risk Categories

4.1.1. Domestic

New sites will be assessed in accordance with the OSSM Risk assessment Matrix (Appendix 1) at the time of approval and existing sites at the time of first inspection. The Risk category will determine the frequency of inspection, which are:

High - inspected every 1 - 3 years.

Medium – inspected every 4 - 6 years.

Low – inspected every 7 – 9 years.

4.1.2. Commercial

All Commercially used properties operating an OSSM will be classed as High risk. The frequency of inspections will be determined from the properties assessment in accordance with the OSSM Risk assessment Matrix (Appendix 1) at the time of approval and existing sites at the time of first inspection.

4.2. Inspection Process and Program

Council will inspect all systems in the Snowy Monaro Regional Council area. Those systems located within the village areas and other high risk areas are a priority and will be inspected initially. Properties within lower risk categories, particularly large properties will not be inspected as part of the initial inspection program unless a complaint is received. Properties will be inspected in accordance with the OSSM Risk Matrix. All inspections will be conducted in accordance with Councils inspection procedure.

The inspection process is outlined in Appendix 2.

4.3. Risk Review

4.3.1. Downgrade of risk rating

Property owners with OSSM systems rated as high or medium risk who have demonstrated a high level of care and maintenance of their system may apply to council to have their risk rating downgraded if they meet the following criteria:

- a. No defects have been identified for the last 3 inspections (high risk) or 2 inspections (medium risk);
- b. The property has remained in the same ownership during the above inspections;
- c. The property is owner occupied (not tenanted or holiday rental);

For applications to downgrade an OSSM with a low risk rating, an assessment will also be undertaken in accordance with the risk assessment matrix in Appendix 1. Consideration will be given to the level of risk to public health and the environment when assessing the application.

If the risk rating is downgraded, it may remain at the lower risk level if the following criteria are met:

- a. No defects are identified at any subsequent inspection;
- b. The property remains in the same ownership;
- c. The property remains owner occupied (not tenanted or holiday rental)

Properties can only be downgraded by a maximum of three levels from their original risk assessment.

4.3.2. Upgrade of risk rating

Property owners with OSSM systems that are observed to be poorly performing and/or that pose a risk to public health and/or the environment may have their risk rating upgraded if the following criteria are met:

- a. Compliance action has been required pertaining to the operating performance of the OSSM; or
- b. Defects have been identified for the last 2 inspections.

5. Fees and Charges

5.1. Annual Rates OSSM fees

A service fee will be included as part of the invoicing section of the rates notice for properties which operate an On-Site Sewage Management System. This fee is in line with the recommended fee as outlined in the Department of Local Government – Council Rating and Revenue Raising Manual.

The OSSM fees includes components for:

- Scheduled inspection
- Maintenance of OSSM data base
- Application & Renewal of Operating Approval

5.2. Conveyancing

Property owners with OSSM systems which require a current Operating Approval for the purpose of property sale will incur an inspection fee as set in Council's Fees and Charges.

5.3. Re-inspection

Property owners with OSSM systems which require a re-inspection due to system failure will incur an inspection fee as set in Council's Fees and Charges.

5.4. Ownership Transfer

New property owners with OSSM systems which require the transfer of a current Operating Approval will incur a transfer fee as set in Council's Fees and Charges.

6. Responsibilities

6.1. Council

Snowy Monaro Regional Council responsibilities include:

- Ensuring approval is sought for the implementation and operation of on-site sewage management systems within the Snowy Monaro Regional Council area.
- Assessing approvals and proposed systems.
- Identifying all on-site sewage management systems within the Snowy Monaro Regional Council area.
- Supervising and monitoring the operating performance of each individual system by on-site inspections.
- Development and maintenance of a register of on-site sewage management systems within the Snowy Monaro Regional Council area.
- Identifying the potential risk posed by systems and classifying systems, as well as identifying sensitive areas.
- Enforcing compliance with operational standards, to protect public health and the environment, including orders and penalties for non-compliance.
- Determining renewal of approvals to operate an on-site sewage management system.
- Responding to complaints and pollution incidents.
- Considering long term goals and solutions for enhanced protection of public health, the environment and community amenity.
- Guiding system operators toward obtaining further information and assistance.
- Completing an overall risk assessment of the program as well as risk assessments to individual sub programs of this strategy.

6.2. Education

It is important that owners of On-site Sewage Management Systems understand how their system operates and the possible consequences of a faulty or mismanaged system. Older houses with on-site systems may have been bought and sold a number of times and current owners may not even know where the system is located.

Council recognises its responsibility to provide appropriate information to owners. This will be through a program of inspections and public education programs which will include informal education of owners of On-site Sewage Management Systems and distribution of information and fact sheets. It will also involve the education of service agents, plumbers, builders and developers to ensure a consistent approach in inspection and certification.

Council will provide “The Easy Septic Guide” to all new property owners and to all applicants of an Approval to Operate.

6.3. Owners

The individual property owner is responsible for:

- Seeking approval to operate an on-site sewage management system from Council
- System operation and maintenance requirements
- Regular Maintenance – determine and understand the required maintenance for their system, including operating within the manufacturer’s instructions, implementing conservative use of water and avoiding strong chemicals so as to maintain efficient system performance, and as a result extend the operational life of the system.
- Ensuring that their system is operating effectively and complies with approval conditions and statutory requirements, including not allowing wastewater to be discharged onto non-designated areas.
- Ensuring that no wastewater is discharged to any watercourse, either permanent or intermittent.
- In the case of Aerated Wastewater Treatment Systems, owners must ensure that maintenance and service contracts are current and operational as well as ensuring that the system is visited by a service provider in accordance with NSW Health Accreditation and a copy of that service report shall be forwarded to Council.
- Must ensure that occupants are provided with the necessary information and support to successfully operate and maintain their on-site sewage management system, in the case of absentee owners.
- Providing relevant information to Council as requested.

7. Enforcement

Council’s enforcement powers should only be utilised when other approaches have failed.

Council’s enforcement procedures are outlined within Council’s Enforcement Policy and is aimed at giving the property owner/occupier every opportunity to comply with Council’s requests prior to enforcement proceedings being instigated.

Areas for investigation include the following:

- Operating without prior Council Approval
- Operating otherwise than in Accordance with terms of Approval
- Dwellings with inadequate or failed systems
- Pollution Incidents

8. Monitoring and Review

This policy may be reviewed and updated as necessary when legislation changes or policy requires it; or Councils functions, structure or activities change; or when technology advances or new systems change the way that Council manages OSSM.

Appendix 1 – OSSM Risk Assessment Matrix - Domestic

RISK ASSESSMENT FACTORS	LEVEL OF RISK			COMMENTS
	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW	
Land area	< 2Ha 90	2 Ha - < 4 Ha 10	4 - 100 Ha = 5 > 100 Ha = 0	
Distance from waterbodies	< 40 m to depression/ dam/ intermittent water supply Or < 100m to permanent Surface water 30	40 - 100m to depression/ dam/ intermittent water supply Or 100 - 150m to permanent Surface water 20	> 100m to depression/ dam/ intermittent water supply Or > 150m to permanent Surface water 0	
Water Supply	Access to reticulated supply 25		No access to reticulated supply 0	
Proximity to human Activity (buildings/ recreational lawn/ property boundaries, etc.)	> 6 m 20	6 - 12m 10	< 12m 0	
Slope	Steep > 20 % 20	Undulating / Sloping 10% - 20% 10	Flat < 10% 0	
Potential occupancy of dwelling (no. bedrooms)	> 4 Bedrooms + Serviced shed or Secondary Dwelling (including studio or Granny Flat) 15	3 -4 Bedrooms 10	< 3 bedrooms 0	
Soil Type	Clay 15	Loams 5	Gravels, Sands & Sandy Loams 0	
Pump used to convey effluent upslope to effluent management area	Primary treated effluent with no high level alarm on holding tank 10	Primary treated effluent with high level alarm on holding tank Or Secondary treated effluent 5	Effluent gravity fed down slope 0	
Nearest Bore	< 250m 10		> 250m 0	
System specific considerations (e.g. high level alarms on collection wells) <i>Note: Effluent pump-out system considered high risk regardless of mitigation measures</i>		10		
TOTAL SCORE				
> 90 = High Risk > 200 = 1yr, 150 - 199 = 2yr, 90 - 149 = 3yr	30 - 89 = Medium Risk 70 - 89 = 4yr, 50 - 69 = 5yr, 30 - 49 = 6yr		0- 29 = Low Risk 19 - 29 = 7yr, 10 - 19 = 8yr, 0 - 9 = 9yr	
Commercial Assessment	All On-site Sewage Management system used for commercial purposes will have a risk rating of High. The frequency of scheduled inspections will be based on the assessed score using OSSM Risk Assessment Matrix		Yearly inspection = > 90 2 years = 30 - 89 3 years = < 30	

Appendix 2 – Inspection Flow Chart

