

# Integrated Pollution Identification & Correction (PIC) Protocol for Site Inspections

## Data Analysis

- Analysis of water quality will determine area of focus.

## Property Evaluations

- Initial evaluation of properties will be completed through drive-by assessments conducted by the Planning Department's Critical Areas Ordinance inspector or Public Work's property inspector hired as a part of the National Estuary Program (NEP) Pollution Identification and Control (PIC) grant. These inspectors will complete an inspection form for each property (attached). This form will include information on Protected Critical Areas, onsite and aerial photo land use observation, nearby streams or waterbodies, buffer widths, suspected discharge source, and whether an inspection is required. If an inspection is required, a notification of site visit will be mailed to the property owner.

## Notification of Site Visits

- Property owners will be sent a letter of introduction, stating that their neighborhood and/or area has been identified as having chronic fecal coliform water quality problems and that their property in particular was noted as having a potential fecal coliform source.
- If there is no response after **2 weeks**, the County will send out a letter that there will be an unannounced site visit within **30 days** by Skagit County Public Health (SCPHD) and Skagit County Planning & Development Services (SCPDS).
- If, 30 days after the second site visit request, property owner has still not contacted the County or is refusing access to the property, the County will contact another agency to request a visit, contingent upon availability.

## Initial Site Visit:

- Both human and animal sources of fecal loading will be investigated.
- Within 2 weeks of the visit, a follow-up letter will be sent confirming conditions noted at the site visit. A copy of the letter will be sent to the agency to which the landowner is being referred.
  - If there are no fecal coliform sources, a thank you letter will be sent to the landowner.
  - If potential fecal coliform sources are identified, the landowner will be informed of these potential sources and the County will refer the landowner to the appropriate agency(ies). A copy of the inspection form will also be sent to the appropriate agency(ies).
  -

## Referrals to Resources Agencies

- Skagit Conservation District (SCD)--farm plan and Best Management Practices (BMPs)
  - County will inform SCD of landowners referred to SCD within two days of completing a site visit.
    - Landowners will contact SCD within 10 business days of receiving referral letter from the County.
    - Following landowner contact, SCD will schedule a joint site visit with the County and will inform the County in writing within five business days of the actions recommended to the landowner.
    - If there are egregious violations occurring, SCD will work with landowner to quickly implement immediate action BMPs to eliminate sources of pollution within five business days. Other BMPs will follow if needed; all referrals will receive a farm plan.
    - SCD will provide the County with a list of the water quality-related BMPs included in the Farm Plan as well as an implementation timeline. County inspector will monitor on the ground-progress as outlined in Tracking section below\*\*.
  - If the property owner does not contact SCD within **10 days** of referral, SCD will notify the County.
  - County will turn to SCPH, SCPDS, or Ecology to investigate potential septic issues or Critical Areas Ordinance violations, or to file an ERTS as outlined below \*\*\*.
- Skagit County Planning & Development Services (SCPDS) regarding Critical Areas Ordinance (CAO). The Skagit County CAO is very site-specific. The zoning of a parcel dictates the areas of the CAO the property owner needs to meet.
  - SCPDS will follow-up within 30 days.
  - **FOLLOW CAO PROTOCOL.**
- Skagit County Public Health Department regarding septic systems.
  - **FOLLOW HEALTH DEPARTMENT PROTOCOL.**

- Washington State Department of Ecology regarding potential to pollute or water pollution not covered above.
  - ERTS system. Ecology will keep the County informed of progress on a **monthly basis**.

**\*\*Tracking Progress**

- Follow-up visits will be made by County personnel to ascertain progress. If progress is being made as indicated by actions taken by the property owner (e.g. contacting a septic system designer, working with SCD on a farm plan, or building fences to keep animals out of the water), additional follow-up visits will be scheduled as appropriate. Property owners preparing farm plans will be provided with information regarding the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), Natural Resource Stewardship Program (NRSP), and Agricultural Best Management Practices Funds as appropriate.
- Dates by which certain actions are to be completed by the property owner can be negotiated to help ensure progress continues. A letter from the County outlining this agreed upon progress schedule will be sent to the property owner. The schedule will direct subsequent site visits to the property.
- If the property owner does not meet the agreed upon schedule for improvements, enforcement actions will be taken.

**Interim Solution**

If there is an obvious source of fecal contamination, the property owner is responsible for implementing a short-term solution to abate the fecal contamination source.

- If it is an on-site sewage system (OSS) failure, a Health Officer order can be issued to plug the outlet baffle of the septic tank and have the tank pumped regularly until the OSS is repaired.
- If it is a water quality violation, the interim solution will be dependent upon the type and extent of the violation, but will typically result in an Immediate Action Plan (IAP). Examples include:
  - Livestock have unfettered access to the water course – operator moves the livestock to another location temporarily.
  - SCD deploys emergency exclusion fencing

**\*\*\*If no response following two letters and final site visit attempt**

**On Site Sewage:** *On site sewage (OSS):* Skagit County Code 12.05, *On Site Sewage Systems* in Marine Recovery Areas have the same inspection requirements as OSS systems elsewhere. Conventional systems are to be inspected once every three years and more complicated systems require annual inspections. If these inspections are not completed, a \$75 per day fine can be issued to the property owner. If an inspection is not forthcoming and the fine accumulates to \$5,000; the file is turned over a collection agency if there is no evidence that the system is failing.

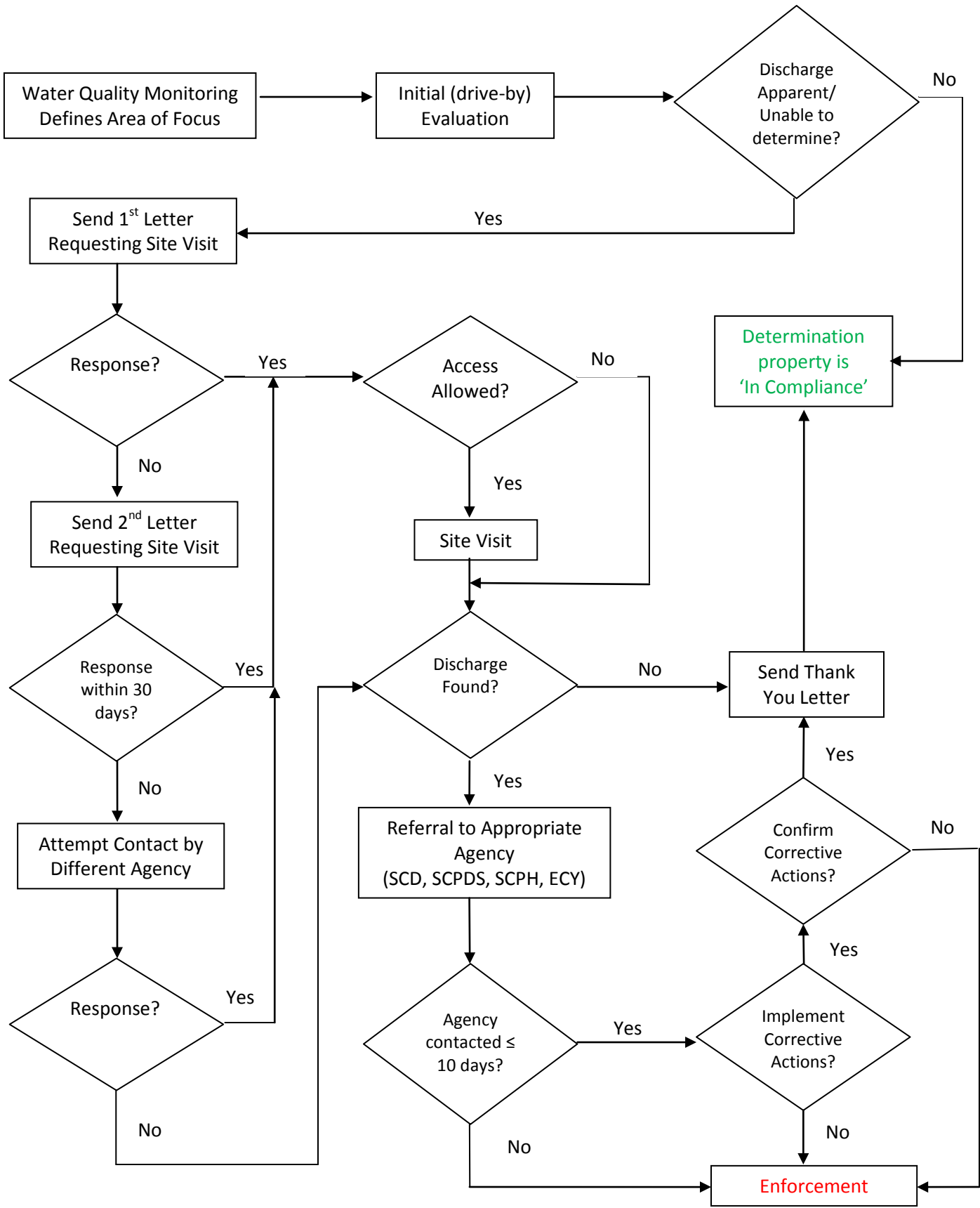
If the OSS system is failing, Health Department personnel are authorized under WAC 246-272A, and SCC 12.05 to order a repair and issue a fine. Past experience has shown this to be effective in getting repairs completed once a failing OSS system is identified.

**Critical Areas:** Skagit County's Critical Areas Ordinance is very site specific. The zoning of a particular parcel will determine what portions of the CAO need to be met. If a property owner does not allow access to the property, field staff will make their best effort to view areas of the property from public access points and/or neighboring properties where access has been granted.

1. If an obvious CAO violation is observed, it is then reported as a Request for Investigation (RFI) to PDS. RFIs regarding water quality within the Samish Watershed will be investigated within two working days.
2. If a potential CAO violation is observed, it will be documented and the property will be noted in the County's tracking system as needing seasonal follow up.

**Ecology:** Incidents will be reported to Ecology via ERTS if pollution of waters of the State are observed, or there is a substantial potential to pollute, and there is no progress on the part of the property owner to remedy the cause of the pollution.

# Skagit County PIC Program Site Visit Flow Chart



All actions are tracked in the County's database, including properties that are currently in compliance but may require continued or seasonal follow up