

## DISCOVERY OF A LEGACY SEPTIC SYSTEM

### Intent and Benefit

Continued use of, remodel, or reconnection to a legacy septic system may be authorized provided no apparent public health or environmental hazards have resulted from such use, per inspection by QSE. A Site Evaluation Report shall be prepared by a qualified individual and submitted to DEH for review and approval, similar to any other new project on an unimproved parcel.

### Background

June 26, 1973, the Mendocino County Board of Supervisors adopted Ordinance 1107, setting the minimum standards for the installation of septic systems, including the issuance of official septic permits. Before the adoption of the ordinance septic permits were recommended and many sites have permits predating the ordinance. All systems that were in operation prior to the effective date of that ordinance (January 1, 1974) were “grandfathered in” without additional documentation. These legal pre-ordinance systems shall be referred to as legacy systems for the purpose of this policy.

### Policy Implementation

Continued use of a legacy system may be authorized provided no apparent public health or environmental hazards have resulted from such use, per inspection by a licensed soil evaluator. If the previous building burned down or was demolished or removed within the last 12 months, this will be considered existing use for purposes of this policy.

Functioning Legacy septic systems found to be in less than 24 inches of soil that are supporting existing occupied structures will not require replacement if there are no apparent public health or environmental hazards at the time of discovery. Remodels of the associated structures may be authorized if no increase in septic load will occur.

If the EH staff analysis determines the existing sewage system is not suitable for a proposed new use, then a new system shall be designed per the Mendocino County LAMP to support proposed the new use.

### REQUIRED FINDINGS

1. The septic tank location, size, material, and general condition. An effluent filter and access risers shall be required for all tanks. The QSE may require pumping a tank for inspection.
2. The leach field location and condition, number of trenches and length and depth of each trench shall be determined and shown on a scale site plan drawing. Leach field may be located with either electronic equipment (less impact) and/or by actual excavation. Excavation to determine trench dimensions shall be required.
3. Soil conditions in the area of the leach field shall also be determined by backhoe excavation (or alternately by >3 soil auger borings if labor is provided). Field texture estimates and all other significant characteristics shall be reported on the *Mendocino County Soil Profile Description* form.

4. The EH staff shall analyze the suitability of the existing system dimensions, condition and design for the proposed new use, using the Mendocino County LAMP as the standard. This determination shall be documented to the file using the *Mendocino County Site Evaluation Report Format for On-Site Sewage Systems*, excepting the laboratory analysis.
5. An area sufficient for 100% replacement of the sewage system shall be identified by backhoe excavation (or alternately by soil auger boring if labor is provided) and shown on the scale site plan drawing. Field texture estimates and all other significant characteristics shall be reported on the *Mendocino County Soil Profile Description* form.

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