



On-Site Wastewater Treatment System Regulations: Quick Guide

What is the purpose of the OWTS Regulations?

Under the On-site Wastewater Treatment System (OWTS) Act, Colorado implements Regulation 43, which governs on-site wastewater treatment systems or septic systems. Regulation 43 sets minimum standards for how small wastewater treatment systems in Colorado (treating 2,000 gallons of wastewater or less per day) should be located, designed, constructed, and used. County health departments use these minimum standards to create rules, including permit application requirements, issuing permits, system inspection, and system maintenance.

Background

In 2013, the legislature passed the OWTS Act (C.R.S. 25-10-101 et al.) to protect the environment, ensure clean water, and promote public health. Establishing regulations for OWTS in Colorado is essential to set standards and enforcement measures for the public.

The Water Quality Control Commission adopts rules for OWTS under this act. Once the commission approves OWTS rules, every county health department in Colorado must adopt detailed regulations for small wastewater treatment systems that comply with the commission's rules and the OWTS Act.

Stakeholder process

Starting in August 2023, the Water Quality Control Division held meetings to discuss possible changes to the regulation. The division ended sessions in Aug. 2024, followed by a rulemaking hearing by the commission scheduled for March 10, 2025. The division is considering the following changes in the proposal:

- Updating references to the most recent versions of technical standards.
- Clarify various sections to state the legal intent more clearly.
- Correcting current cross-referencing errors.
- Clarifying general prohibitions and permitting requirements.
- Expanding or clarifying requirements for flow estimates and required setbacks.
- Updating and/or defining OWTS design requirements.
- Clarifying perceived conflicts within the regulation.
- Updating when higher-level treatment systems are necessary for high-risk areas.

To learn more about the stakeholder process, visit the [Water Quality Engagement Webpage](#) and [sign up](#) for email notifications.

Questions

Email questions or comments to cdphe.commentswqcd@state.co.us.