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Salish Sea Ecosystem Conference

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(Seattle, Wash.)

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Apr 6th, 9:15 AM - 9:30 AM

## Impact of septic systems in Drayton Harbor water quality

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Hayden, Jennifer, "Impact of septic systems in Drayton Harbor water quality" (2018). *Salish Sea Ecosystem Conference*. 468.

<https://cedar.wwu.edu/ssec/2018ssec/allsessions/468>

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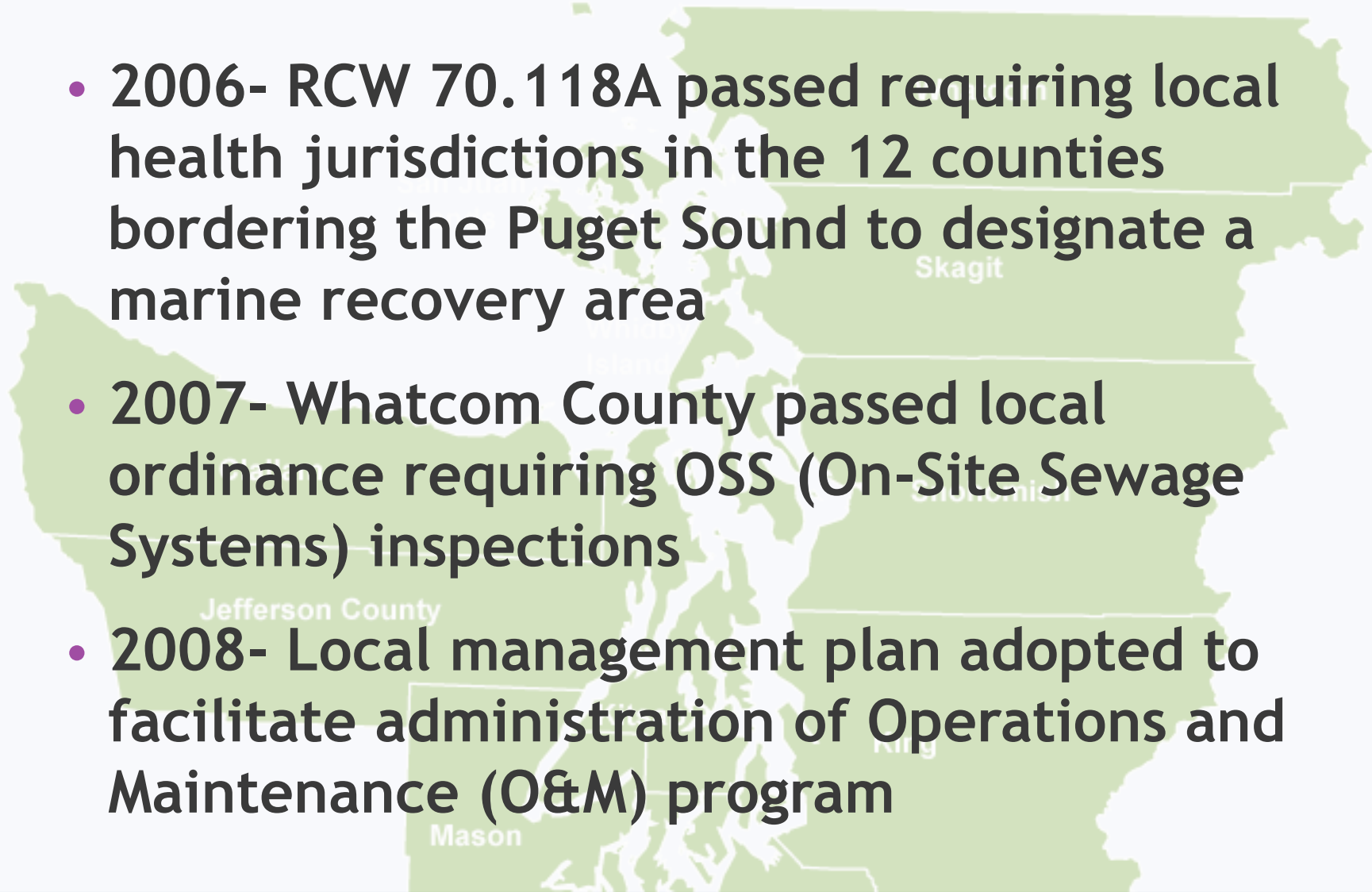
# Addressing Impact of Septic Systems in Drayton Harbor Water Quality



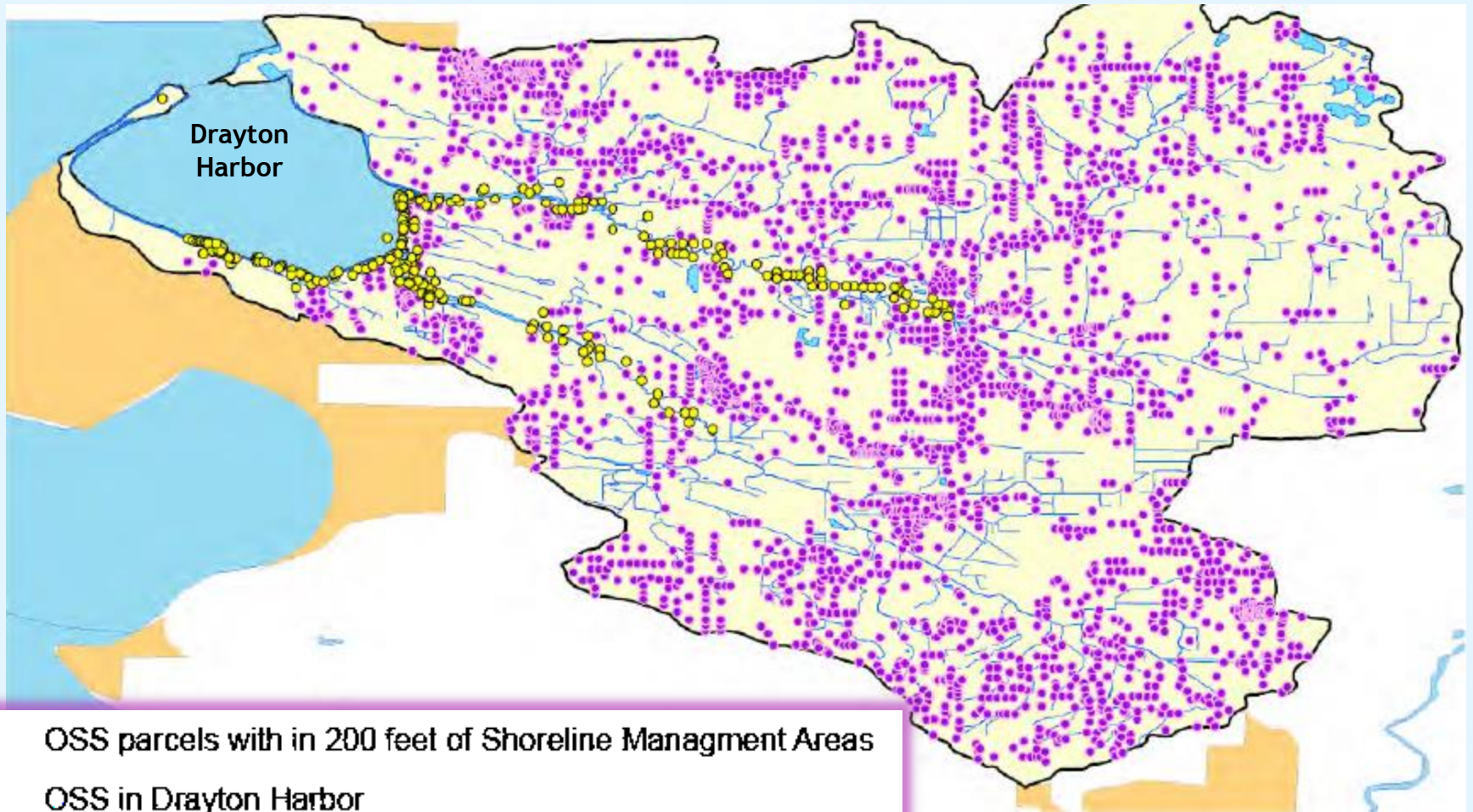
**Jennifer Hayden - Whatcom County Health Department**

# Regulation History

- 2006- RCW 70.118A passed requiring local health jurisdictions in the 12 counties bordering the Puget Sound to designate a marine recovery area
- 2007- Whatcom County passed local ordinance requiring OSS (On-Site Sewage Systems) inspections
- 2008- Local management plan adopted to facilitate administration of Operations and Maintenance (O&M) program



# Drayton Harbor Watershed With Mapped OSS





# Whatcom County O&M Program History

- 2007- Staff hired to administer program
- Inspections required to be completed by O&M Specialists
- Funded from septage pumper fees and O&M specialist fees
  - \$35 filing fee for OSS inspection submission
  - \$3/100 gallon pumping fee

# Current O&M Program

- 2 full time staff
- Funding from a fee collected from property owners in Whatcom County with OSS (\$19/year)
- Homeowners may perform their own inspections
- Mailings to targeted watersheds are sent out several times a year requiring an inspection
  - Homeowners have ~ 6 months to have an inspection once mailings are sent out

# Current O&M Program

- **Require OSS inspections**
- **Provide trainings**
- **Conduct audits of OSS inspections**
- **Notify property owners when OSS require maintenance**
- **Investigate potential OSS failures**
- **Perform sanitary surveys based on results of water sampling conducted by Public Works**



# Require OSS Inspections



Inspections can be completed by a licensed O&M specialist or the homeowner

Homeowners must complete an in-person or online training



# Audit Homeowner Inspections

Both of these OSS were reported as “Satisfactory”

Sewage flowing into  
a wetland



Sewage flowing directly  
onto the ground





# Send “Maintenance Needed” Notices to Property Owners

Overgrown drainfield



Outlet pipe not watertight





# Investigate Failures Reported by O&M Specialists

Grey water 'tank' draining  
onto the ground



Sewage flowing into a  
roadside ditch





# Perform Sanitary Surveys





# Drayton Harbor

## 2008-2009



- > 2,000 inspections performed
- 66 Failing OSS discovered



# Drayton Harbor Success Story

Failing drainfield



Replaced drainfield





# Drayton Harbor

## Summary of Successes

- >3,100 OSS in Drayton Harbor
- >6,700 OSS inspections performed in Drayton Harbor since 2008
- 100 failing OSS discovered due to inspections
- >40 failing OSS discovered through:
  - neighbor complaints
  - applications for repair permit submitted