

# Centralia Septic to Sewer Project

Protecting groundwater through  
clear requirements and shared investment

Holly Fuller and Chris Stone, City of Centralia  
Chehalis Basin Partnership • October 23, 2026

**Groundwater quality is the reason for this program**

**Centralia depends on a vulnerable,  
highly permeable groundwater aquifer.**

Elevated nitrates have been documented in portions of the aquifer.

Septic discharges are one source we can address where sewer exists.

**A functioning septic system can still affect groundwater**

**Passing an inspection does not establish  
that a system prevents nitrate loading.**

The former inspection provisions focused on whether systems worked.

Aquifer protection also requires addressing what reaches groundwater.

# Where the former code fell short

| Former approach                                                  | Practical problem                                                      |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Connection within 60 days of notice                              | Limited time to arrange financing and construction                     |
| Homeowner bore the connection costs                              | A substantial bill stood in the way of compliance                      |
| Inspection and connection provisions addressed separate concerns | A functioning system could still contribute to the groundwater problem |

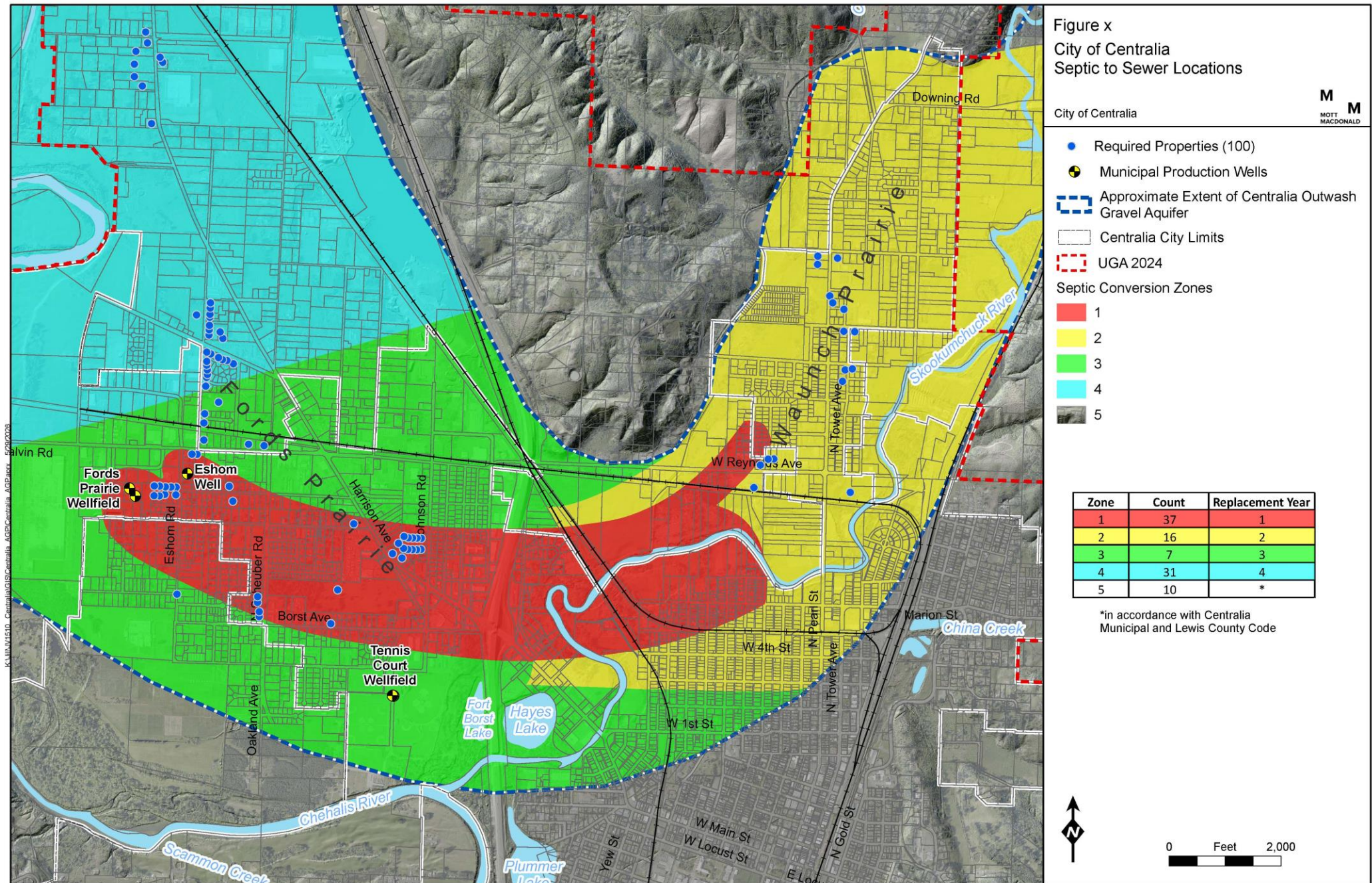
**The requirement existed. Too many septic discharges remained.**

# Our solution: a phased aquifer-protection program

| Program element                    | How it addresses the problem                                                              |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Clear connection obligation        | Require connection to available, abutting sewer under the program's applicable conditions |
| Groundwater-based priorities       | Use drinking-water capture zones to guide which properties receive notice first           |
| One year after written notice      | Give owners time to arrange and complete the work                                         |
| Connection plus septic abandonment | End the property's septic wastewater discharge                                            |

**A passing septic inspection does not cancel the program's connection requirement.**

## Phased Map



## **Water pays the wastewater capital fee**

**The Water Department pays the wastewater capital facility fee on the customer's behalf as an aquifer-protection investment.**

The customer remains responsible for other applicable fees, private connection work, and septic abandonment, unless additional assistance (grants and loans) cover those costs.

# Sewer Connection Cost

| ITEM DESCRIPTION                                                                                                                                                              | COST PER CONNECTION | SEPTIC TO SEWER PLAN                                                    |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Wastewater Capital Facility Fee</b>                                                                                                                                        | <b>\$9,480.00</b>   | Water Department pays this fee to protect the Aquifer.                  |
| <b>Sewer Permit &amp; Inspection Fee</b>                                                                                                                                      | <b>\$125.00</b>     | Homeowner pays this fee.                                                |
| <b>Physical Connection to Main</b>                                                                                                                                            | <b>\$6,000.00*</b>  | Homeowner either hires a contractor to do this or does this themselves. |
| <b>Septic Tank Abandonment</b>                                                                                                                                                | <b>\$1,500.00*</b>  | Homeowner either hires a contractor to do this or does this themselves. |
| <p><b>*Estimated cost*</b></p> <p>Each individual home's connection may differ. You may be able to do this work yourself as long as you follow City and County standards.</p> |                     |                                                                         |

# **Ecology funding reduces the financial burden**

## **Assistance for customers and the Water Department**

Ecology funding would help pay eligible program costs.

**Thank you to the Partnership members and organizations  
that provided letters supporting the funding request.**

- Thurston County PH&SS
- Lewis County Water Conservancy Board
- Lewis County PH&SS

# Next steps and groundwater results

| Timing                | Program work                                                                                       |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Late 2026             | Confirm implementation funding and priority properties<br>Prepare notices and customer information |
| January 2027 target   | Begin the planned rollout and property notifications                                               |
| Following each notice | Complete connection within the one-year period<br>Verify proper septic abandonment                 |
| Ongoing               | Track completed conversions and groundwater nitrate trends                                         |

**The outcome: fewer septic discharges over our drinking-water aquifer.**

# Questions?