
Date: Nov. 2, 2020
To: Environmental Quality Commission
From: Richard Whitman, Director
Subject: Item G: Commission's annual self-evaluation (Informational)
Dec. 3, 2020, EQC special meeting

Why this is important The Oregon Environmental Quality Commission must complete an annual self-evaluation. The survey gives commission members the opportunity to review their processes and procedures and DEQ information to refine and improve commission support. The results of the survey are included in the DEQ Key Performance Measures report, and were previously provided as part of the director's report at the Sept. 17-18, 2020, EQC meeting.

Survey results The performance measure has a summary target of 100 percent, and the 2020 self-evaluation, assessing the 2019 meeting year, had a summary average total of 92 percent. The compiled results, including narrative responses, are included as Attachment A.

Areas for improvement In the survey, several questions scored lower than average. Two of these questions, 8 and 9, relate to opportunities for the commissioners to collaborate with partner entities or governments, and for the commissioners to participate in agency hearings and meetings. Responses also indicated that DEQ could do more to ensure commissioners are kept up-to-date on high-profile issues.

Many of the narrative responses indicated an interest in revisiting the commission's engagement opportunities – both formal and informal. DEQ will follow-up with individual commissioners and the commission as a body to discuss communications, outreach, engagement and collaborative multi-entity work that could better involve the commission.

Next steps and commission involvement DEQ may provide additional training, information and support to the commission in response to the survey results.

Attachments A. Compiled survey results, 2019 meeting year

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EQC self-evaluation survey results for 2019 meeting year

Questions 1 through 12 are multiple choice and used to create a numerical score for the annual survey. Questions 13 through 15 are narrative and help DEQ improve commission meetings and support going forward.

Commissioners were given the following options for the multiple choice responses:

- None of the time (0 percent)
- Some of the time (40 percent)
- Most of the time (80 percent)
- All of the time (100 percent)
- Do not know (no percentage assigned)

The commission scored an overall 92 percent for the 2019 meeting year, based on the responses to questions 1 through 12. Averaged responses for each question are shown below.

1. The commission is kept updated about DEQ's key communications.

- *84 percent*

2. The commission is appropriately involved in policy-making activities, such as rule adoption.

- *96 percent*

3. DEQ's budget and policy option packages are aligned with its mission and goals.

- *96 percent*

4. The commission reviews all proposed agency budgets.

- *100 percent*

5. The commission is appropriately informed about agency budgets and how resources are used at DEQ.

- *92 percent*

6. Based on the budget and financial information presented to the commission at its regular meetings, DEQ adheres to accounting rules and other relevant financial controls.

- *100 percent*

7. I am aware of and act in accordance with my role as a public official

- *96 percent*

8. The commission encourages collaboration and has opportunities to collaborate with other state, local, tribal and federal entities.

- *84 percent*

9. DEQ offers commission members opportunities to participate in hearings, informational meetings and other agency events.

- *72 percent*

10. The commission reviews the director's performance expectations to ensure that they are current.

- *100 percent*

11. The commission gives the director an annual performance review.

- *92 percent*

12. The agency's mission and high-level goals are current and applicable.

- *92 percent*

Questions 13, 14 and 15 are narrative. The responses below are taken directly from the commissioner responses.

13. How would you like the commission to engage with the public, whether as part of the formal meeting agenda or in more informal settings?

- I think there can and should be a place for both. The formal interaction during EQC meetings seems cumbersome and one-sided. I would like to have the ability to interact more with the public. Understanding the challenges, I also would like to have more public comment timely and specific to an action.
- This is particularly difficult during the COVID pandemic. Less structured interactions are good when possible, but if they are after a whole day of meetings it does make a very long day for the Commissioners.
- This is a challenging question to ask this year, however, I think this is one we've struggled with as we've held an expectation that we would develop one way to engage with the public in our meetings. I think we need to create space to be more flexible in our engagement based on the time, location, space, and interests of the communities we are meeting. This does necessitate more planning in advance of meetings. As we return to in-person meetings. I would like to see a more intentional effort to talk about how we might engage the public in planning any given meeting. I don't assume we will always take up the opportunity, but its important to have the conversation. If this is supported in a structured way, I think we can appropriately weigh the merits of a handful of community engagement approaches prior to planning each meeting.

- I would like to try to improve engagement. I appreciated the fact that we tried something new with adding more public comment periods in the EQC meetings although these did not necessarily have the desired effect and instead encouraged more comments from a few dedicated individuals. Subsequently, I do not want to continue that practice or make it more pointed and only include these types of ‘open comment’ periods during briefing type presentations of major new policies that are getting introduced prior to voting. This could help include more perspectives on a particular issue with enough time for follow up.
- I think the aspect that is missing is that engagement is typically bi-directional sharing of knowledge and experience. This might happen between the public and DEQ staff during their daily operations, but it does not happen at the EQC meeting. So I would be in favor of changing the custom that public comment sessions are only listening sessions and try to make these about engaging in discourse on a topic brought forth by the public (albeit a timed discourse).
- I like it in the formal meeting, but we need more town halls in the future once pandemic is over.

14. What environmental policy topics would you like DEQ, or partners, to present to the commission in the next one or two years as informational or learning opportunities, not necessarily connected to any expected commission action?

- I want to fully understand TMDL development and oversight. I want to specifically understand the state and federal role in adoption and regulation. I also want to know how/if TMDL’s are reviewed and/or adjusted.
- I remain interested in the recycling program, the status of recycling, international pressures and whether anything can be done from a policy or rulemaking perspective to encourage public/private partnerships that might increase recycling or the market for recycled products.
- We annually meet in conjunction with Forestry and Agriculture. While I wouldn’t want these “co”-meetings to dominate the schedule it seems they could be intermingled with meetings to discuss issues in common with the Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Environmental Health section of the Oregon Health Authority.
- I would like to better understand our recycling system.
- The breadth of DEQ is quite large, but I would personally like to see how different polices and practices have had impact on environmental quality. And, what we can learn from policies that worked well and those that haven’t. So ‘lessons learned’ on water quality, land quality, air quality, etc.
- An update on the recycling program and how it is being rebuilt in the wake of China’s National Sword policy.
- Continued attention on ozone and other air pollutants that are trending in the wrong direction.

- Update on Cleaner Air Oregon and how that policy is unfolding and whether it has had the desired effect.
- Water quality updates and collaborations with other agencies to try to reduce non-point source pollutants.
- Programs that are reducing GHG emissions
- An update from the Department of Forestry regarding the distance of logging from waterways since OR allows the narrowest corridor, but this is possibly an important resiliency factor for water quality and water temperature.
- Mercury from abandoned mines
- CAFO issues
- Klamath Basin water issues in light of dam removal problems

15. What are the most critical environmental policy actions you think that the commission, and DEQ, should accomplish in the next one to two years?

- A robust and adequately funded Emergency Response Program
- A common language and understanding of water quality in the state.
- A prioritization of water quality improvement projects, based in part on attainability. Additionally, partnerships with landowners and other public agencies to work on water quality should be (or continue to be) a priority.
- Get the Department on a path to actively improving water quality in impaired watersheds especially from nonpoint sources, in coordination with partners. It seems to me that this is the area where that state is most stuck and not making progress. It seems that other interests have effectively prevented the reduction of nonpoint source pollution in many areas. I think an important part of this is being clear in our messaging that this is necessary to protection aquatic resources that Oregonians care about and to implement Oregon regulation and the Clean Water Act.
- Address climate change by reducing GHG emissions
- Reduce non-point source pollution in our waterways through collaborations with appropriate agencies, community projects, increasing tree/vegetation coverage near waterways, etc.
- Reduce drivers of ozone concentrations in OR airsheds which will require reducing ozone precursors (vehicular emissions, etc).
- Policies and practices that improve water quality and quantity that promotes salmon populations and with particular attention paid to Klamath Lake.
- Eliminate aerial herbicide spraying in watersheds
- Increase revolving funds that will help communities upgrade their wastewater treatment
- Fix the recycling system
- Given the budget crisis caused by COVID-19, it will be important to think creatively about how to develop new funds (like the revolving funds) that will help

municipalities and businesses upgrade systems or do the practices needed to protect environmental quality. The next few years are going to require new and creative ways to implement environmental policies and practices.

- Evolve the policies and management practices that can reduce the inputs that lead to nutrient loading in surface waters that are contributing to harmful algal blooms in our freshwater and marine systems.
- Stronger effort on Willamette River issues
- Stronger focus on air emissions from diesel trucks in Portland metro, we continually target utilities and industry but vehicle emissions which are the biggest problem get off lightly, unfortunately we are going after the deep pockets rather than the biggest offender