

Date: Sept. 5, 2023
To: Environmental Quality Commission
From: Leah Feldon, Director
Subject: Agenda item E, Informational item: Integrated Report 2024 Assessment Methodology, Sept. 14-15, 2023, EQC meeting

Purpose of item DEQ will provide an update on the draft 2024 Integrated Report Assessment Methodology and summarize key issues raised during public comment.

Background The Integrated Report documents Oregon's biennial water quality assessments to meet U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Clean Water Act Sections 303(d), 305(b), and 314 reporting requirements for Oregon's waters. Although not a written report, the Integrated Report is a reporting of the status of water quality in Oregon and a list of waters considered to be impaired. The Integrated Report can be accessed in four ways:

- An interactive story map provides an overview of the water quality assessment process, displays assessment results and presents an overview of how DEQ's water quality programs are connected through monitoring, assessment and watershed protection.
- An interactive web map application that displays the Integrated Report by overall status of an assessment unit. The application also provides all applicable water quality standards.
- An online searchable database provides parameter specific categorical conclusions for all assessed units and raw data used for download.
- An ArcGIS Assessment Geodatabase spatially displays information from Oregon's 2022 Integrated Report.

Oregon statute requires DEQ to publish the Integrated Report assessment methodology prior to the start of drafting the report. The Assessment Methodology for Oregon's 2024 Water Quality Report and

List of Water Quality Limited Waters describes how data will be evaluated at the assessment unit level and how DEQ will develop Oregon's 2024 Integrated Report.

Following the submittal of the last Integrated Report in May 2022, DEQ began prioritizing updates to its 2024 Assessment Methodology. DEQ prioritized both short-term (2024 cycle) and long-term methodology updates (future report cycles). The 2024 Assessment Methodology development had a robust public process that included a technical workgroup for marine waters. The Ocean Acidification and Hypoxia technical workgroup met 13 times and provided a detailed review of draft documents prior to release. DEQ hosted two informational webinars and provided opportunities for both formal and informal comments from interested parties.

DEQ recently completed updates to its 2024 Assessment Methodology. Priority updates include:

- Updated format and structure for the Assessment Methodology document
- Specific methodology to delist for temperature related impairments using continuous data
- Revisions to water contact recreation assessment
- New Ocean Acidification and Hypoxia Assessment Methodologies for marine waters

Documentation on these updates can be found here:

<https://www.oregon.gov/deq/wq/Pages/Integrated-Report-Improvements.aspx>

Agency action items

DEQ held one public process for the non-marine waters portion of the draft 2024 Assessment Methodology for the Integrated Report, and, due to its complexity, a separate process focused specifically on the Ocean Acidification and Hypoxia Assessment Methodologies.

DEQ posted the inland and estuaries draft Assessment Methodologies for public comment on Jan. 5, 2023, and accepted comments on the methodologies through Feb. 21, 2023. The draft 2024 Ocean Acidification and Hypoxia Assessment Methodologies for marine water were posted separately on May 31, 2023, and comments accepted through July 7, 2023.

As part of the process, DEQ accepts data and information from the public that may be used to assess the condition of Oregon's water bodies. DEQ posted its 2024 statewide call for data for inland and estuarine waters from Feb. 6, 2023, through April 7, 2023, and for marine waters from June 15, 2023, through Aug. 14, 2023.

At the Sept. 14-15, 2023, commission meeting, DEQ will describe the 2024 Integrated Report methodology improvements, summarize feedback received and detail how DEQ addressed the comments. DEQ will highlight outreach that was completed throughout the process and provide an updated schedule for submittal to EPA submittal.

Next steps DEQ will assess the water quality data submitted and draft a 2024 impaired waters list (303(d)) list and status report for Oregon waters to release for public comment in early 2024. DEQ will incorporate internal and external feedback into its final assessment in spring 2024. DEQ plans to submit its final assessment to EPA in April 2024 for approval.

Attachment A. Presentation slides

EQC involvement DEQ staff have briefed the commission on past iterations of the Integrated Report and last provided an update in May 2022. No commission action is requested at this time. The commission is not required to act on the Assessment Methodology or the Integrated Report. Oregon Statutes (ORS 468B.039) requires the commission to provide an opportunity for public comment on the draft Assessment Methodologies during the commission meeting, and that will occur at the commission meeting on Sept. 14, 2023, following the staff presentation.

DEQ expects to brief the commission on the draft Integrated Report in 2024.

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