


State of Oregon
Department of Environmental Quality

Memorandum

Date: Sept. 30, 2015
To: Environmental Quality Commission
From:  Dick Pedersen, Director
Subject: Agenda item D, Information item: DEQ's water quality program
Oct. 14-15, 2015 EQC meeting

Why this is important In response to a recent commission request, DEQ will provide a comprehensive overview of the agency's Water Quality Program, including current status, long term strategic planning and current challenges and opportunities.

Background The Water Quality Program's mission is to protect and improve Oregon's water quality. Protecting Oregon's rivers, lakes, streams and groundwater quality keeps these waters safe for a multitude of beneficial uses such as drinking water, fish habitat, recreation and irrigation. This is accomplished by developing and implementing water quality standards and clean water plans, regulating wastewater treatment systems and industrial discharges, collecting and evaluating water quality data, providing grants and technical assistance to reduce non-point pollution sources, and providing loans to communities to build and update treatment facilities.

General program overview U.S. EPA and the Clean Water Act has granted DEQ as the state agency in Oregon responsible for carrying out the Clean Water Act requirements and protecting Oregon's public water for a wide range of uses. In addition, DEQ has additional, specific authorities under state law that complement DEQ's federally required programs.

Some of the water quality programs DEQ carries out include:

- Setting water quality standards to protect beneficial uses such as recreation, fish habitat, drinking water supplies, and aesthetics;
- Monitoring rivers, streams, lakes, near shore ocean waters, and groundwater;
- Assessing and reporting on the quality of Oregon's waters
- Developing Total Maximum Daily Loads and working with sources of pollution to implement water quality improvement plans where water quality is not sufficient to meet water quality standards;
- Developing and issuing permits for discharges of wastewater to meet minimum federal technology requirements and water quality standards as well as protect groundwater;
- Certifying that projects receiving federal permits contain sufficient

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requirements to meet water quality standards;

- Providing low cost loans for communities and other public entities to upgrade their treatment works and other water quality-related infrastructure;
- Providing technical assistance to regulated entities to ensure compliance, conducting inspections and carrying out enforcement actions;
- Working with other state agencies and partners to support programs they administer to benefit water quality.

These program areas are closely connected; actions taken in one program directly have an effect on others. As a result, carrying out these program requirements requires close collaboration and coordination among DEQ's water quality staff in headquarters, the laboratory and in the regional offices.

Program elements

During the presentation, staff will provide an overview of DEQ's authorities and requirements, the related subprograms it administers, as well as activities and other program elements that make up the Water Quality Program.

Program challenges

The Water Quality Program has ongoing challenges and areas in need of improvement to modernize the way it interacts with regulated entities and the public, and ensure implementation of its programs protect Oregon's water quality. Staff will highlight these challenges and work being done to address some of these areas.

Next steps

The Water Quality program is finalizing its Water Quality 2035 Vision and Strategy. This strategy, initiated in late 2013 with input and participation from all sectors of the program, will guide the work of the program for the next 20 years and help the agency improve on its successes and meet its challenges for water quality protections.

Attachments

A. Draft Water Quality 2035 Vision and Strategy

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