

Date: Feb. 28, 2025
To: Environmental Quality Commission
From: Leah Feldon, Director
Subject: Agenda item H, Informational item: 2024 Water Quality Integrated Report
March 13-14, 2025, EQC meeting

Purpose of item DEQ will provide an overview to the commission about the 2024 Integrated Report that will be submitted to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in February 2025 for final approval.

Prior EQC involvement DEQ presented an informational update on the 2024 Integrated Report and the associated Assessment Methodology at the September 2023 Environmental Quality Commission meeting. The update included information on the draft 2024 Integrated Report Assessment Methodology updates and revisions, a summary of comments received during the public comment periods, and DEQ's response to those comments. During the EQC meeting, the public had an additional opportunity to comment on the methodology updates. Oregon statute requires DEQ to provide this information to the commission before applying the assessment methodology for analyzing water quality data and drafting the Integrated Report (ORS 468.B.039).

Background The federal Clean Water Act requires the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality to report on the quality of Oregon's surface waters every two years. Surface waters are any body of water above ground, including streams, rivers, lakes, wetlands, reservoirs, creeks and the ocean. This effort represents the state's most comprehensive evaluation of water quality data and information to determine whether Oregon's waters fully support beneficial uses, such as fish and aquatic life, drinking water, or water contact recreation.

The result of these analyses and conclusions is called the Integrated Report because it combines the requirements of Clean Water Act section 305(b) to develop a status report and section 303(d) requirement to develop a list of impaired waters that need a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL). The Integrated Report is submitted to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for final approval before it becomes effective.

The 2024 Integrated Report continues to build on the significant improvements enacted in 2020 to the foundation for assessing water quality, reporting units and publishing findings to a diverse audience. DEQ continues to improve the assessment methodology and conducts extensive outreach to the public and interested parties about updates and revisions to each reporting cycle.

The development of the 2024 Assessment Methodology had a robust public process

that included a technical workgroup for marine waters. DEQ hosted two informational webinars and provided opportunities for both formal and informal comments from interested parties. DEQ held two separate public comment periods and received 19 comments from five entities on the Draft 2024 Assessment Methodology. Based on the comments received, DEQ made clarifications to the 2024 Assessment Methodology and reporting.

As part of the Integrated Report development 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 Integrated Report 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.

**2024
Integrated
Report results
and
comments
received**

DEQ applied the 2024 Assessment Methodology, which included updated methods to delist for temperature-related impairments, revisions to water contact recreation assessment, and new ocean acidification and hypoxia assessment methodologies for marine waters to water quality data. This reporting includes assessing over nine million water quality monitoring results collected by 141 organizations at over 3,000 unique locations statewide. DEQ assembled these data from publicly available databases and through the open Call for Data.

DEQ made the draft 2024 Integrated Report available for public comment from April 18, 2024, through July 1, 2024, with an extension request granted. Staff provided two informational webinar options (morning and evening) to discuss findings and demonstrate the functionality of the new tools which were recorded and made available online. Water Quality Assessment staff will present the 2024 Integrated Report findings as part of its presentation.

DEQ staff received 49 unique comments from 53 entities on the draft 2024 Integrated Report. DEQ considered all comments and made modifications to the report based on nine of the comments. Most comments focused on TMDL priority ranking, corrections to assessment conclusions, underlying data, clarifications on delistings and other ways to evaluate beneficial use support.

Key issues

In addition to the general reporting, DEQ evaluated four new pollutants and conditions in the draft 2024 Integrated Report: ocean acidification and hypoxia, aquatic trash and PFOS.

For the three past assessment cycles, DEQ has received data on the impacts of ocean acidification and hypoxia on fish and aquatic life. DEQ has listed sections of marine waters (waters within three nautical miles offshore) as impaired for these conditions based on climate change-related causes. By including these assessments in the Integrated Report, DEQ recognizes the impact of changing ocean conditions on plants and animals in the ocean, while also understanding more information is needed to determine how Oregon's actions to implement climate change policy and water quality management can influence these largely global water quality stressors.

DEQ received data and information during the 2024 Integrated Report Call for Data related to aquatic trash in the Willamette River and some tributaries. EPA guidance for the 2024 Integrated Report expects that states consider trash a pollutant regardless of whether the state has an established assessment methodology. Based on this, DEQ has listed two sections of the Willamette River and one section of Marys River as impaired for aquatic trash. Aquatic trash is a complex issue with many sources and causes. While DEQ administers some relevant programs, many sources of aquatic trash are outside of DEQ's regulatory control.

PFAS, or per and perfluoroalkyl substances, is a group of commonly used chemicals for non-stick and stain-resistant consumer products, packaging, fire-fighting foam and industrial processes. These chemicals are long-lasting and widespread in the environment. PFOS, or perfluorooctane sulfonic acid, is one type of PFAS chemical. DEQ has listed the Columbia Slough for PFOS based on the Oregon Health Authority's fish consumption advisory. DEQ typically lists areas with OHA fish consumption advisories in its Integrated Report. DEQ's Cleanup Program will continue to work with local governments and other parties to identify and mitigate known sources of PFAS and related compounds in the Columbia Slough.

DEQ will describe these issues and efforts in more detail as part of its presentation to the commission.

**EQC
involvement**

This is an informational item and no EQC action is required. DEQ will provide the commission with regular updates on future Integrated Reports and their methodologies to the commission.

**Supporting
materials**

- A. [DEQ's Integrated Report Fact Sheet](#)
- B. [2024 Integrated Report](#)

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Translation or other formats

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