

State of Oregon  
Department of Environmental Quality

Memorandum

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**Date:** Feb. 26, 2013

**To:** Environmental Quality Commission

**From:** Dick Pedersen, Director

**Subject:** Agenda item K, Informational item: DEQ's mid-Columbia assessment featured on OPB's Oregon Field Guide program  
March 20-21, 2013, EQC meeting

**Why this is important** DEQ's laboratory research project on the mid-Columbia River was recently featured on Oregon Public Broadcasting's program *Oregon Field Guide*. Lab staff updated the commission on this project in 2011. Since then the Lab has completed the project and report and will inform the commission about the outcomes and discuss findings with the commission. Staff intends to show the DEQ-related segment of the television program at the meeting as part of this item.

**Background** OPB's staff accompanied DEQ scientists on a series of sampling trips to the lower mid-Columbia River as part of their background research for the Oregon Field Guide program. During these trips, DEQ staff demonstrated their technical skills to assess the state of Oregon's water quality. The lower mid-Columbia assessment, completed in 2012, was the first comprehensive assessment of water quality for the 150 river miles between the Bonneville and John Day dams. DEQ's water quality staff sampled and analyzed water taken from this stretch to understand the overall quality and state of this important river. Generally, the lower mid-Columbia River's water quality is good, though it is threatened by bioaccumulative toxins, such as mercury and PCBs, which are found in nearly all parts of the Columbia River.

This assessment fills information gaps and compliments studies conducted by states, tribes, federal agencies and non-governmental organizations to gauge conditions, identify problems and find solutions to pollution issues affecting the Columbia River. EPA, which provided funding for this assessment, listed the Columbia Basin as one of seven Great Water Bodies deserving of special attention and protection from environmental harm.

**Resources** 1. DEQ's webpage for the lower mid-Columbia River assessment project:  
<http://www.deq.state.or.us/lab/wqm/middlecolumbia.htm>

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Information provided by DEQ staff