

State of Oregon
Department of Environmental Quality

Memorandum

Date: March 30, 2012

To: Environmental Quality Commission

From: Dick Pedersen, Director

Subject: Agenda item C, Informational item: DEQ's Water Quality Standards Program
April 25-27, 2012, EQC meeting

Purpose of item This agenda item will update the commission on the role, responsibilities, structure and relevance of DEQ's Water Quality Standards Program. It will also provide specific information about two proposed standards revisions that require commission action.

Background DEQ administers a Water Quality Standards Program under delegation from the federal Environmental Protection Agency and sets standards for Oregon's water quality. These standards are benchmarks to assess whether the quality of Oregon's rivers and lakes is adequate for fish and other aquatic life, recreation, drinking, agriculture, industry and other uses. DEQ also uses its standards as regulatory tools to prevent pollution of Oregon's water. EPA must approve all changes DEQ makes to its water quality standards.

How DEQ sets its standards DEQ uses its scientific expertise, through monitoring and assessment of water quality samples, to set water quality standards that correspond to the commission's policies and directives and meet the directives of the Clean Water Act. DEQ must review its standards every three years to incorporate the latest scientific information and make necessary revisions. DEQ must provide an opportunity for the public to review and comment on any draft proposed revisions or new standards. After the public comment period, DEQ reviews the information received, assesses the draft standards considering the feedback and makes changes based on any new or relevant information presented in the comments. Once finalized, the proposed standards are presented for commission action. If the commission approves the standards, DEQ sends these to EPA for final review and approval before being implemented in Oregon through DEQ's regulatory programs, such as permitting, and its non-regulatory programs, such as technical assistance and community outreach.

J.C. Boyle Dam At this commission meeting, DEQ Water Quality staff will present revisions to standards related to potential removal of the Klamath Dam. The proposed standards will clarify DEQ's policy and procedures for evaluating whether to certify that the removal of J.C. Boyle dam will

comply with water quality standards for the Klamath River. DEQ's current certification rules do not specify how DEQ would evaluate a project like dam removal, which, when it occurs, will cause some short term water quality impacts but may result in long term water quality and fish protection benefits. Water Quality staff will provide additional information about the proposed revision during the presentation of this item.

West Division Canal in Hermiston At the April EQC meeting, staff will also present revisions to the water quality standards for the West Division Canal in Hermiston. The proposed revisions will change some beneficial use designations for the canal that are based on actual uses of the canal water, rather than assumed uses. The canal is used primarily for irrigation and the current standards include provisions for drinking water and other non-irrigation uses.

Attachments None

Approved:

Division: _____

Information provided by DEQ's Water Quality Standards Program

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