

Date: July 23, 2010
To: Environmental Quality Commission
From: Dick Pedersen, Director
Subject: Agenda item C, Informational item: Oregon's groundwater
August 18-19, 2010 EQC meeting

Purpose of item This information item will provide the commission information about groundwater and groundwater quality in Oregon, sources of groundwater contamination, the regulatory and voluntary programs DEQ implements to protect groundwater quality and the relative effectiveness of those programs. This information is intended to provide background information for the November 2010 EQC retreat.

Why this is important Groundwater makes up approximately 95 percent of available freshwater resources in Oregon. Approximately 70 percent of all Oregon residents rely solely or in part on groundwater for drinking water. Over 90 percent of rural Oregonians rely on groundwater for drinking water.

Groundwater is present beneath almost every land surface and is sometimes at very shallow depths. It is vulnerable to contamination from activities that take place on the land and from discharges of wastes and pollutants at or below the ground surface. Once groundwater becomes contaminated, it is very difficult to clean up. Because groundwater moves very slowly, the contamination may persist for tens, hundreds or even thousands of years. Likewise, groundwater that is currently being contaminated may not affect beneficial uses until sometime far into the future. This contamination may impair groundwater for use as drinking water and may affect the quality of the surface waters.

DEQ has primary responsibility for implementing groundwater protection in Oregon. DEQ uses a combination of programs to help prevent groundwater contamination from point and nonpoint sources of pollution, clean up pollution sources, monitor and assess groundwater and drinking water quality. DEQ implements some programs through partnerships with the Oregon Department of Human Services - Environmental Public Health division, Oregon Water Resources Department, Oregon Department of Agriculture, Oregon State University, and other state, local, and private organizations, businesses and individuals.

As surface water resources are used to capacity, Oregonians are becoming

more dependent on groundwater resources and they expect those resources to remain clean, available and useable. As the population of Oregon grows, the importance of clean and safe groundwater will increase.

Attachments None

Approved:

Division: _____

Division: _____

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