



Memorandum

Date: Sept. 2, 2025

To: Environmental Quality Commission

From: Leah Feldon, Director

Subject: Agenda item E, informational item: Draft 2026 Integrated Report Assessment Methodology
Sept. 11-12, 2025, EQC meeting

Purpose and importance of item

DEQ will provide an informational presentation on the draft 2026 Integrated Report Assessment Methodology development, which is crucial for the agency's work. The report will summarize key issues raised during public comment and highlight efforts to solicit statewide water quality data. There will also be an opportunity for the commission to allow for additional public comment on the draft 2026 Assessment Methodology during the public forum immediately following the presentation.

Prior EQC involvement

DEQ staff have briefed the commission on past iterations of the Integrated Report and last provided an update in March 2025, after the completion of the 2024 report cycle.

Background

The Integrated Report documents Oregon's biennial water quality assessments to meet U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Clean Water Act Sections 303(d), 305(b), and 314 reporting requirements for Oregon's waters. DEQ recently completed updates to its 2026 Assessment Methodology.

Oregon statute requires DEQ to publish the Integrated Report Assessment Methodology before drafting the report. The draft Assessment Methodology for Oregon's 2026 Water Quality Status Report and List of Water Quality Limited Waters describes how data will be evaluated at the assessment unit level and outlines how DEQ will develop Oregon's 2026 Integrated Report.

With input from internal and external parties, in 2020, DEQ set a strategic vision for the Water Quality Assessment program that is composed of short-term and long-term priorities for both revising existing and incorporating new methodologies for assessing water status. The program continues to make progress on these priorities, including the major update for 2026 to revised methodologies to assess freshwater biocriteria.

Methodology updates and public process

At the Sept. 11-12, 2025, commission meeting, DEQ will describe the 2026 Integrated Report methodology improvements, summarize feedback received and detail how DEQ addressed the comments. DEQ will highlight outreach that was completed throughout the process and provide an updated schedule for EPA submittal of the 2026 Integrated Report.

Translation or other formats



Memorandum

Key issues

Priority updates for the [2026 Integrated Report Assessment Methodology](#) include:

- Major revisions to freshwater biocriteria
- Minor revisions to harmful algal blooms

The 2026 Assessment Methodology development had a robust public process that included scientific peer review for the freshwater biocriteria update. This review was necessary due to the technical complexity of assessing the freshwater biocriteria criteria, and it ensures the rigor and accuracy of the methodology. DEQ hosted an informational webinar and provided opportunities for both formal and informal comments from interested parties.

DEQ posted the draft Assessment Methodologies for public comment on March 25, 2025, and accepted comments through May 27, 2025.

As part of the Integrated Report development process, DEQ values and accepts data and information from the public that may be used to assess the condition of Oregon's water bodies. DEQ posted its statewide Call for Data for the 2026 Integrated Report from March 25, 2025, through May 27, 2025. This information is crucial to our collective understanding of water quality in Oregon.

EQC involvement

No immediate commission action is requested at this time. The commission is not required to act on the Assessment Methodology or the Integrated Report. Oregon Statutes (ORS 468B.039) require the commission to provide an opportunity for public comment on the draft Assessment Methodologies during the commission meeting.

DEQ looks forward to continuing to engage with the commission and the public on the draft Integrated Report in 2026.

Report prepared by Lesley Merrick
Water Quality Division, Water Quality Assessment Program

Non-discrimination statement

DEQ does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, disability, age, sex, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, or marital status in the administration of its programs and activities. Visit DEQ's [Civil Rights and Environmental Justice page](#).