

Oregon's 2026 Integrated Report – Assessment Methodology **Environmental Quality Commission**

Sept. 11, 2025

Water Quality Standards, Source Water Protection and Assessment



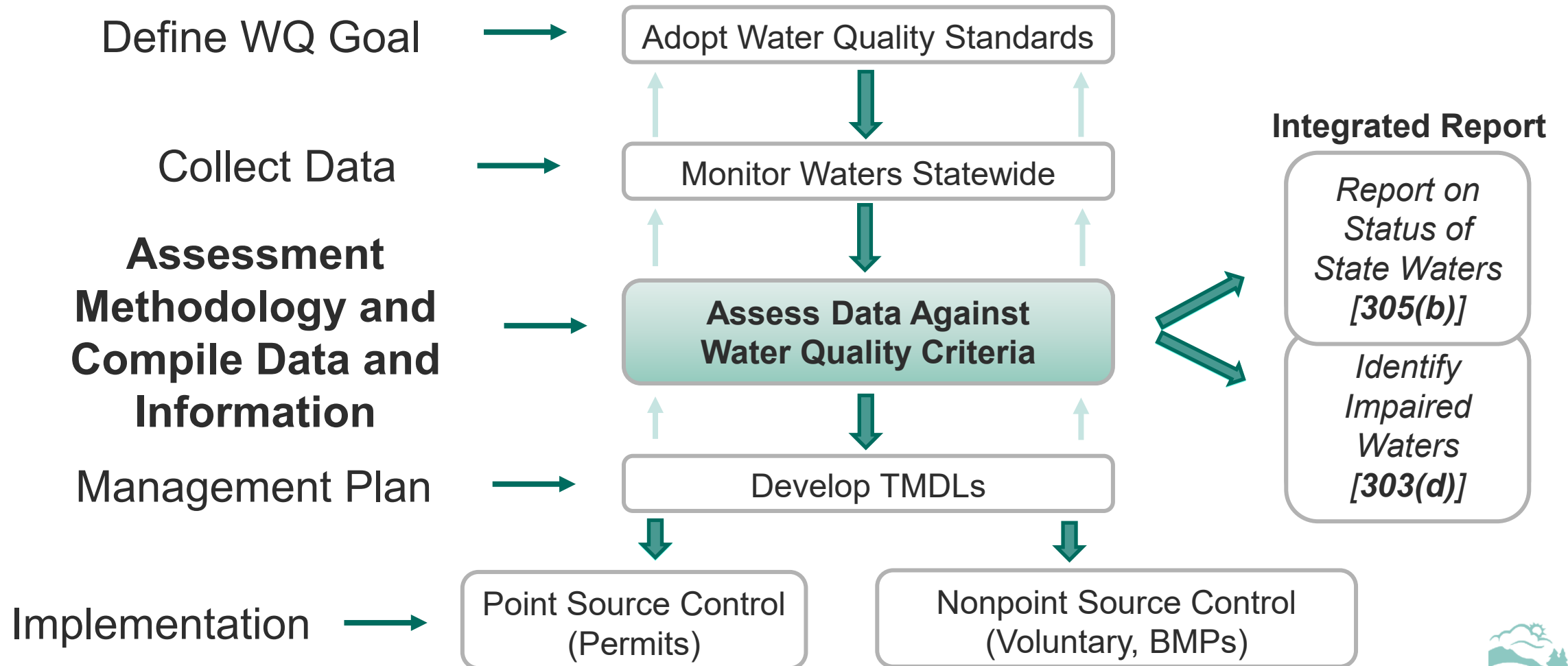
Presentation overview

- Clean Water Act Framework
- Integrated Report process
- 2026 Methodology updates
- Public engagement
- 2026 Integrated Report schedule



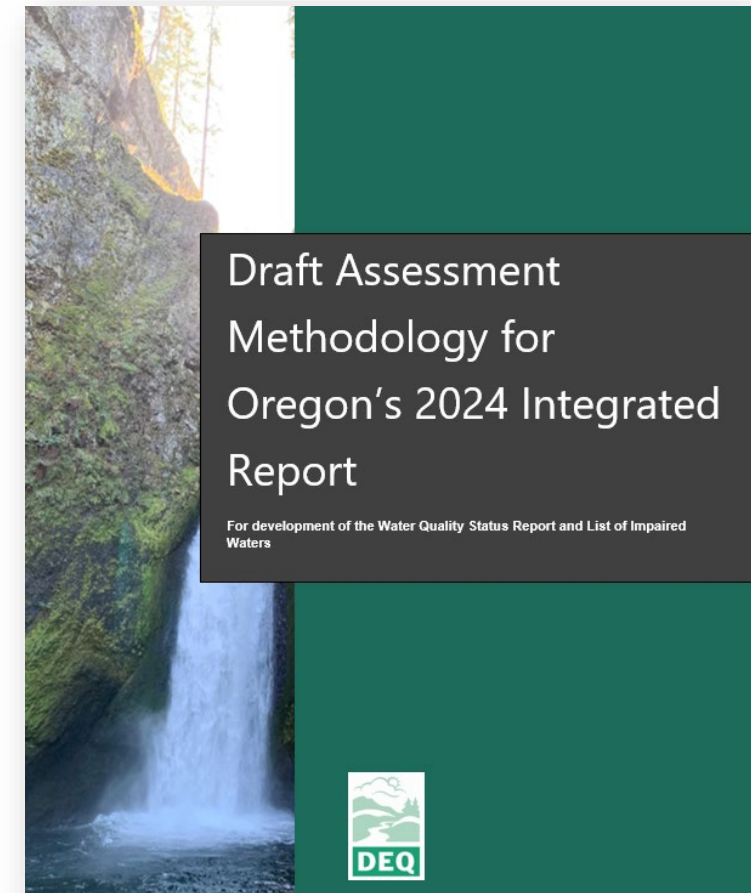
Wallowa River, Oregon

Clean Water Act Framework



What is the Assessment Methodology?

- Documents the "decision rules"
- How to compare data against numeric and narrative water quality standards
- To determine waterbody status
- Scientifically and technically defensible



Integrated Report requirements



State Requirements for Assessment Methodology

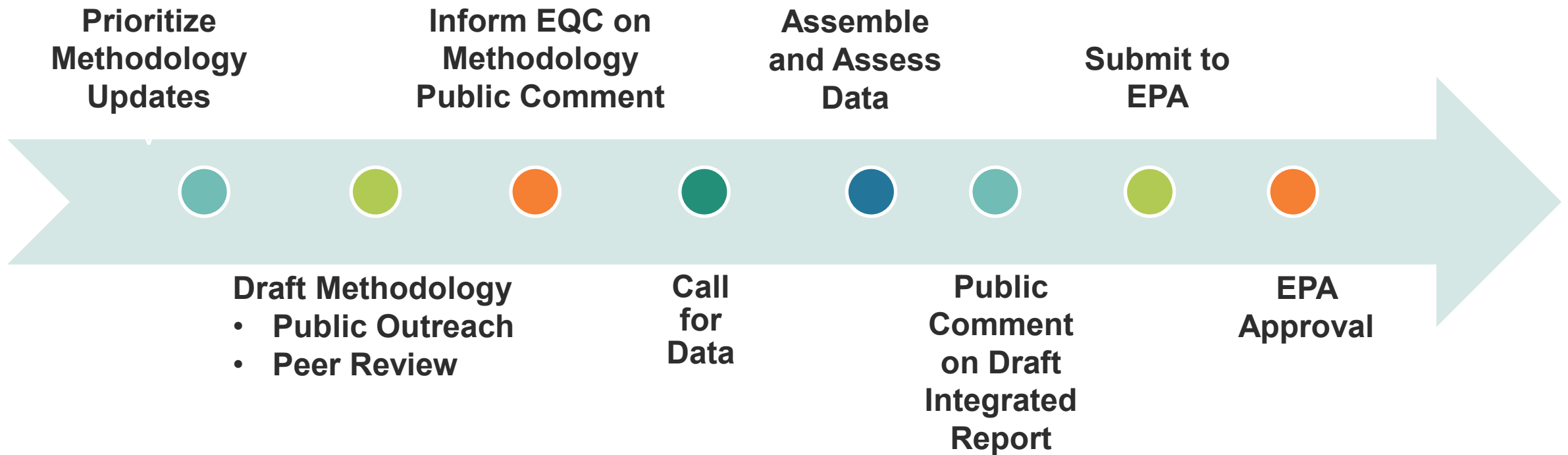
- Assessment Methodology Update
 - Peer review of substantive methodologies
 - Public comment
- Inform EQC and public input



Federal Requirements for Integrated Report

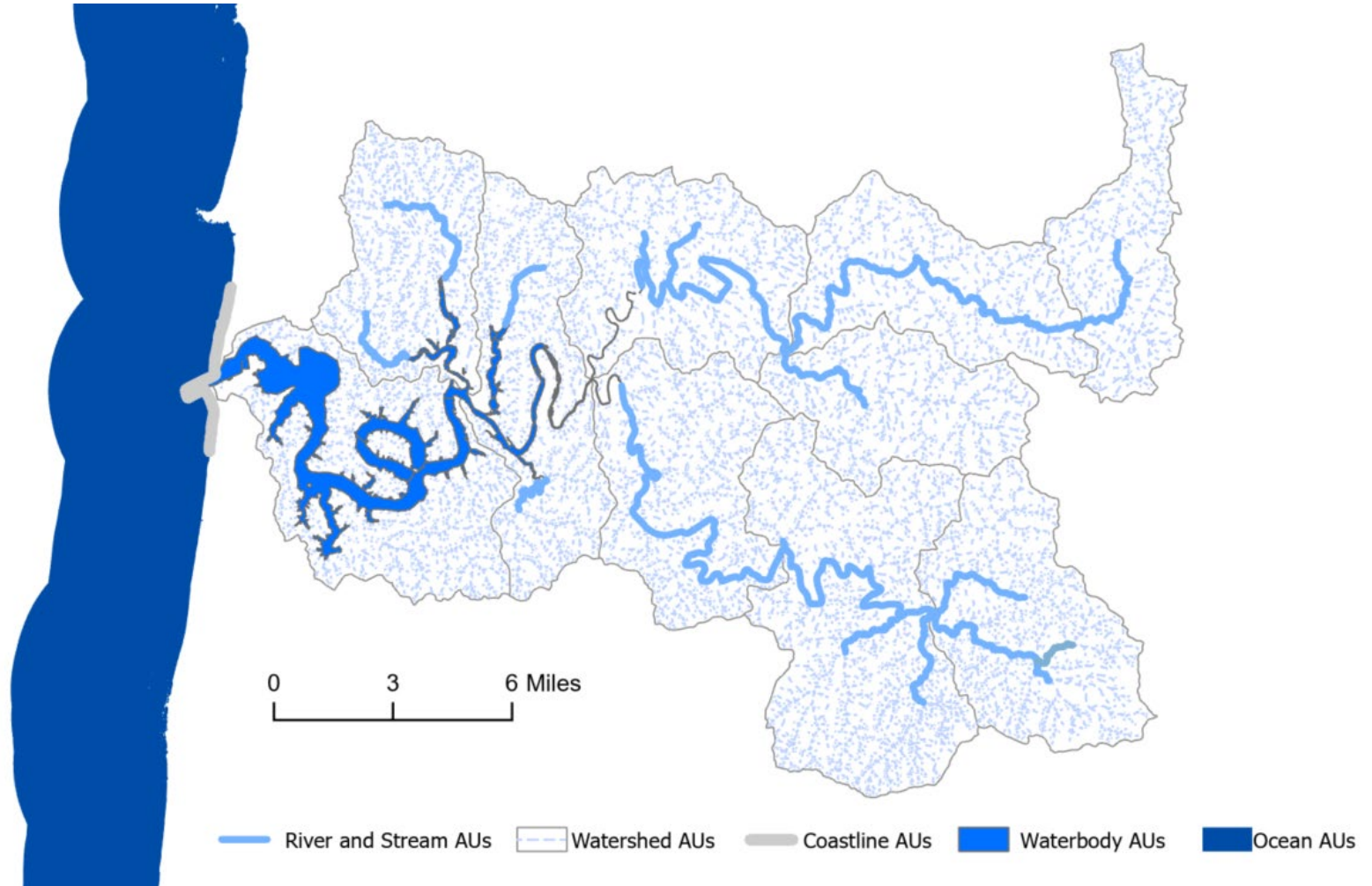
- Assess Oregon's waters every two years
- Public comment on report
- Submit to EPA for approval

Oregon's Integrated Report process



Oregon's Assessment Units

- River and Stream – medium to large streams
- Watershed – small, typically headwater streams
- Waterbodies – lakes, reservoirs, estuaries
- Coastline – beaches
- Oregon territorial marine waters



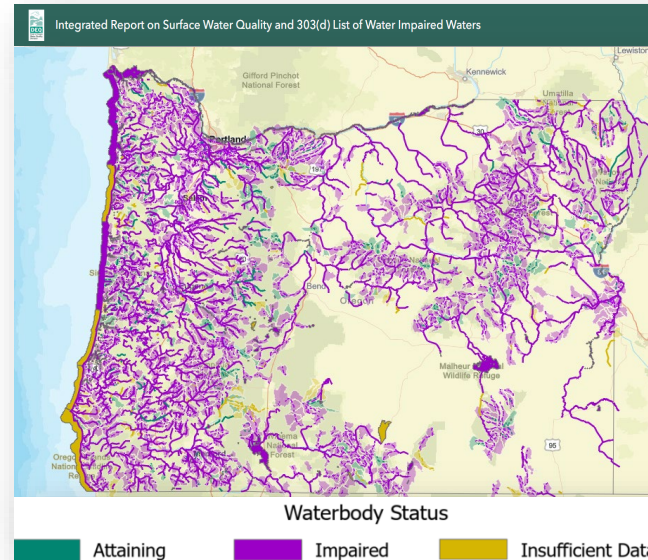
Reporting tools

305(b) Story map



General Overview

Web map



Assessment Unit level reporting

Overall status of the unit based on all assessed parameters

Online database

A screenshot of the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality's online database search interface. The header includes the report title and navigation tabs for "Assessments" and "Raw Data". The main content area features a search filter section with the following fields: "Select Assessment Unit", "Select AU Name", "Select Pollutant", and "Select IR category". Each field is represented by a text input box.

Assessment Unit – Parameter level reporting = Categories
One unit can have up to 140 unique assessments



2026 Assessment Methodology updates

- **Freshwater biocriteria**
 - Major revision
 - Scientific peer review
- **Harmful Algal Blooms**
 - Minor updates
- **All other existing methodologies carry forward**



HABs methodology revisions

- **Water contact recreation**
 - Consistent with Oregon Health Authority recreation advisory guidance
- **Drinking water source water**
 - Assessment of cyanotoxins in raw water for impairment
- **Livestock watering**
 - Impairments based on coordination with OHA and Oregon Department of Agriculture
- **Delisting Methodology**

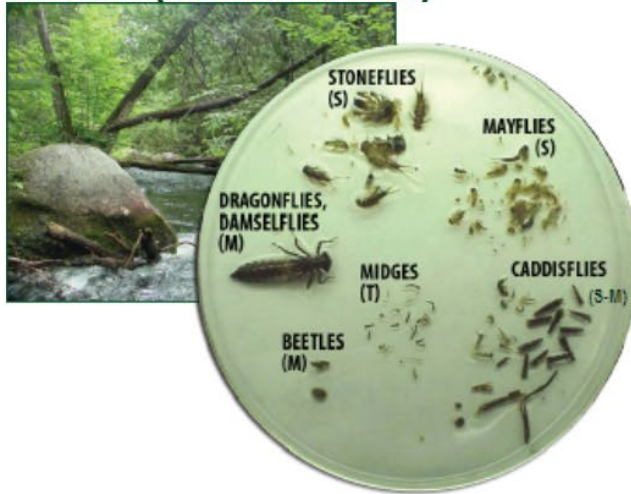


Biological Assessment

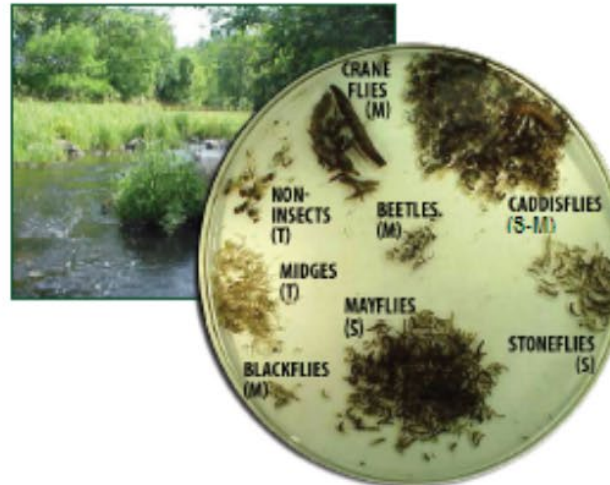
Evaluation of waterbody condition by sampling species that live in the waterbody

sample → biological indicator → reference expectation → metrics/indexes

Undisturbed/Minimally Disturbed Stream (Reference Site)



Nutrient Enriched Stream



Drainage from a Shopping Mall Parking Lot



Credit: EPA- Biological Assessment: Key Terms and Concepts

What is Biocriteria?

- Links biological assessment to the Clean Water Act
- Narrative water quality standard adopted to ensure waterbodies maintain high biological integrity
- Uses bioassessment metrics/indexes as a direct measurement of aquatic life beneficial use support



“Waters of the State must be of sufficient quality to support aquatic species without detrimental changes in the resident biological communities.” ([OAR 340-041-0011](#))

History of Biocriteria assessment

- DEQ began assessing in 2010 Integrated Report
 - Applied the concept of biological assessment to assess biocriteria
 - First application of numeric benchmarks to narrative criteria
- Last revised in 2020 with commitment for a larger revision in the future
 - Feedback from interested parties
 - Recommendations from 2020 peer review



New and updated Bioassessment tools

- Reference condition approach
 - Characterizes extent of human disturbance
 - Transparent process
 - Collaborated with state and federal partners in PNW
- Biological Indexes
 - Loss of native taxa
 - Species composition and structure
 - Narrative description of changes in biological community in response to human disturbance

Attribute	Metric
Native Taxa Loss	O/E
% Pollution Intolerant Taxa	MMI
% Fast-Moving Water Taxa	
% Cold-Cool Water Taxa	
% Mayflies, Stoneflies, and Caddisflies	

Peer review process

- Six panel members of experts in biological assessment
 - Tribal, federal agencies, academia, industry and professional scientists
- Constructive feedback on all aspects of DEQ's proposal
- Significant updates were made based on panel input
- Process worked as intended



Biocriteria assessment methodology

- Increases confidence in 303(d) listings
- Multiple lines of evidence approach
 - Two biological indexes
- Relates assessment categories to ecological condition
 - Narrative biologic condition gradient



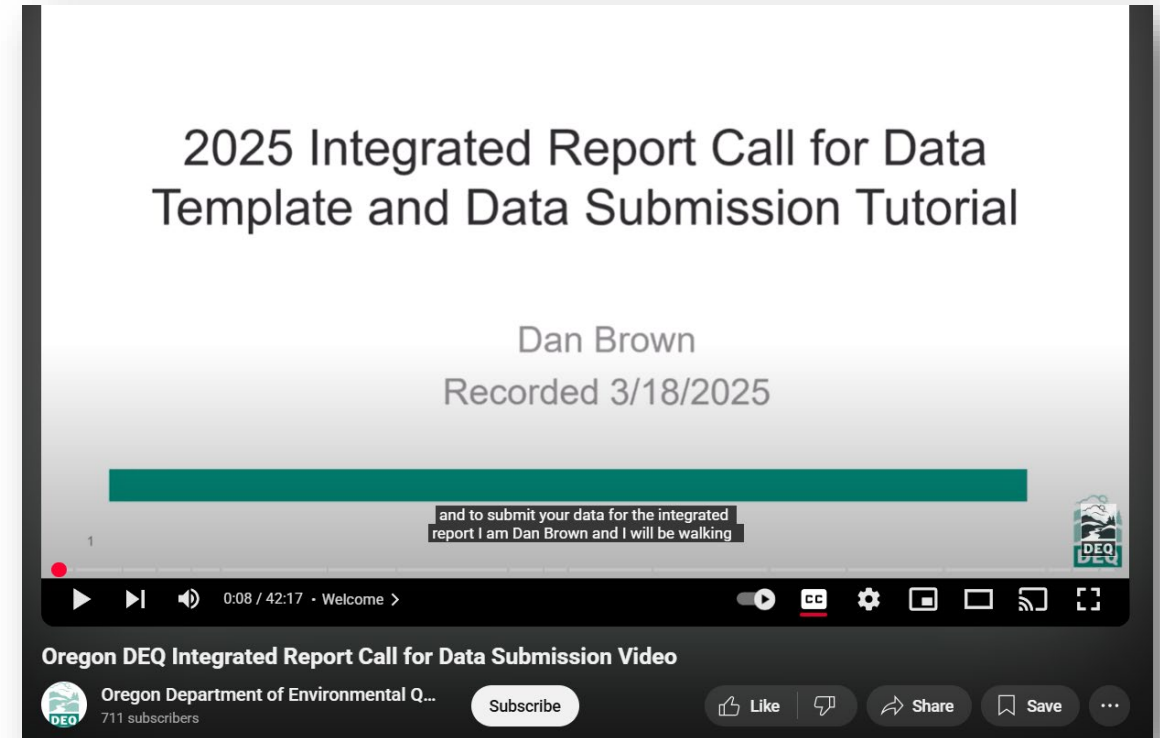
Public engagement

Draft Assessment Methodology

- Information webinar on 2026 updates
 - Technical support documents
 - Summary of biocriteria peer review process
- 60+ day public comment
- EQC update
 - Public comment period following

Call for Data

- Provided a tutorial during the public webinar
- Online video



Call for Data

One Call for Clean Water

- 60+ day data solicitation period
- Submission highlights
 - 17 organizations
 - 55 data files
 - Over 10 million results

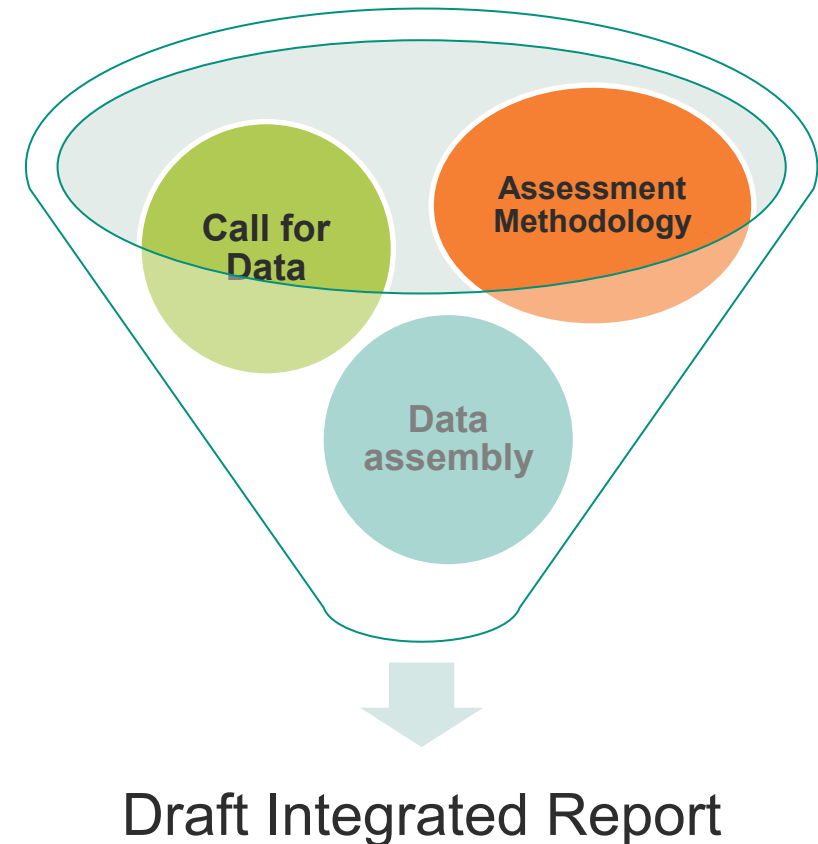
Data Assembly

- Pulled WQ results from publicly available databases
- Data process improvements



Comments received and response

- One comment letter expressing concern over the inability to submit data during the draft report comment period
- Response
 - Allow for limited supporting data to be accepted during the comment period on the draft list
 - Reemphasized DEQ's process for timely submission every two years
 - Encouraged full data submission during the call for data



2026 Integrated Report schedule



Questions?

Program Contacts

- Connie Dou – Water Quality Standards, Source Water Protection and Assessment Manager
- Lesley Merrick – Water Quality Assessment Program Lead
- Travis Pritchard – Water Quality Assessment Analyst



<https://www.oregon.gov/deq/wq/Pages/WQ-Assessment.aspx>