State of Oregon
DEQ Department of Environmental Quality

Outstanding Resource Waters 2027

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Key to identifying changed text:

- ~~Deleted Text~~
- **New/inserted text**

Division 41
WATER QUALITY STANDARDS: BENEFICIAL USES, POLICIES, AND CRITERIA FOR OREGON

340-041-0004
Antidegradation

(1) Purpose. The purpose of the Antidegradation Policy is to guide decisions that affect water quality to prevent unnecessary further degradation from new or increased point and nonpoint sources of pollution, and to protect, maintain, and enhance existing surface water quality to ensure the full protection of all existing beneficial uses. The standards and policies set forth in OAR 340-041-0007 through 340-041-0350 supplement the Antidegradation Policy.

(2) Growth Policy. In order to maintain the quality of waters in the State of Oregon, it is the commission's general policy to require that more efficient and effective waste treatment and control accommodate growth and development such that measurable future discharged waste loads from existing sources do not exceed presently allowed discharged loads except as provided in section (3) through (9) of this rule.

(3) Nondegradation Discharges. The following new or increased discharges are subject to this division. However, because they are not considered degradation of water quality, they are not required to undergo an antidegradation review under this rule:

(a) Discharges Into Existing Mixing Zones. Pollutants discharged into the portion of a water body that has been included in a previous mixing zone for a permitted source, including the zones of initial dilution, are not considered a reduction in water quality, so long as the mixing zone is established in accordance with OAR 340-041-0053, there are no other overlapping mixing zones from other point sources, and the discharger complies with all effluent limits set out in its National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit.

(b) Water Conservation Activities. An increase in a pollutant concentration is not considered a reduction in water quality so long as the increase occurs as the result of a water conservation activity, the total mass load of the pollutant is not increased, and the concentration increase has

no adverse effect on either beneficial uses or threatened or endangered species in the water body.

(c) Temperature. Insignificant temperature increases authorized under OAR 340-041-0028(11) and (12) are not considered a reduction in water quality.

(d) Dissolved Oxygen. Up to a 0.1 mg/l decrease in dissolved oxygen from the upstream end of a stream reach to the downstream end of the reach is not considered a reduction in water quality so long as it has no adverse effects on threatened and endangered species.

(4) Recurring Activities. Since the baseline for applying the antidegradation policy to an individual source is the water quality resulting from the source's currently authorized discharge, and since regularly-scheduled, recurring activities remain subject to water quality standards and the terms and conditions in any applicable federal and state permits, certifications and licenses, the following activities will not be considered new or increasing discharges and will therefore not trigger an antidegradation review under this rule, so long as they do not increase in frequency, intensity, duration or geographical extent:

(a) Rotating grazing pastures,

(b) Agricultural crop rotations, and

(c) Maintenance dredging.

(5) Exemptions to the Antidegradation Requirement. Some activities may, on a short term basis, cause temporary water quality degradation. However, these same activities may also have substantial and desirable environmental benefits. The following activities and situations fall into this category. Such activities and situations remain subject to water quality standards and must demonstrate that they have minimized adverse effects to threatened and endangered species in order to be exempt from the antidegradation review under this rule:

(a) Riparian Restoration Activities. Activities that are intended to restore the geomorphology or riparian vegetation of a water body, or control invasive species need not undergo an antidegradation review so long as the department determines that there is a net ecological benefit to the restoration activity. Reasonable measures that are consistent with the restoration objectives for the water body must be used to minimize the degradation;

(b) Emergency Situations. The director or a designee may, for a period of time no greater than 6 months, allow lower water quality without an antidegradation review under this rule in order to respond to public health and welfare emergencies (for example, a significant threat of loss of life, personal injury or severe property damage); and

(c) Exceptions. Exceptions authorized by the commission or department under (9) of this rule.

(6) High Quality Waters Policy: Where the existing water quality meets or exceeds those levels necessary to support fish, shellfish, and wildlife propagation, recreation in and on the water, and other designated beneficial uses, that level of water quality must be maintained and protected. However, the commission, after full satisfaction of the intergovernmental coordination and public participation provisions of the continuing planning process, and with full consideration of

sections (2) and (9) of this rule, and 340-041-0007(4), may allow a lowering of water quality in these high quality waters if it finds:

(a) No other reasonable alternatives exist except to lower water quality; and

(b) The action is necessary and benefits of the lowered water quality outweigh the environmental costs of the reduced water quality. This evaluation will be conducted in accordance with DEQ's "Antidegradation Policy Implementation Internal Management Directive for NPDES Permits and section 401 water quality certifications," pages 27, and 33-39 (March 2001) incorporated herein by reference;

(c) All water quality standards will be met and beneficial uses protected; and

(d) Federal threatened and endangered aquatic species will not be adversely affected.

(7) Water Quality Limited Waters Policy: Water quality limited waters may not be further degraded except in accordance with paragraphs (9)(a)(B), (C) and (D) of this rule.

(8) Outstanding Resource Waters Policy. Where existing high quality waters constitute an outstanding State or national resource such as those waters designated as extraordinary resource waters, or as critical habitat areas, the existing water quality and water quality values must be maintained and protected, and classified as "Outstanding Resource Waters of Oregon."

(a) The commission may specially designate high quality water bodies to be classified as Outstanding Resource Waters in order to protect the water quality parameters that affect ecological integrity of critical habitat or special water quality values that are vital to the unique character of those water bodies. The department will develop a screening process and establish a list of nominated water bodies for Outstanding Resource Waters designation in the Biennial Water Quality Status Assessment Report (305(b) Report). The priority water bodies for nomination include:

(A) Those in State and National Parks;

(B) National Wild and Scenic Rivers;

(C) State Scenic Waterways;

(D) Those in State and National Wildlife Refuges; and

(E) Those in federally designated wilderness areas.

(b) The department will bring to the commission a list of water bodies that are proposed for designation as Outstanding Resource Waters at the time of each triennial Water Quality Standards Review; and

(c) When designating Outstanding Resource Waters, the commission may establish the water quality values to be protected and provide a process for determining what activities are allowed that would not affect the outstanding resource values. After the designation, the commission may not allow activities that may lower water quality below the level established except on a short term basis to respond to public health and welfare emergencies, or to obtain long-term water quality improvements.

(d) The following are Outstanding Resource Waters of Oregon:

(A) The North Fork Smith River and its tributaries and associated wetlands, South Coast Basin. See OAR 340-041-0305(4).

(B) Waldo Lake and its associated wetlands, Willamette Basin. See OAR 340-041-0345(7)

(C) Crater Lake, Klamath Basin. See OAR 340-041-0185(6)

(D) The Wild and Scenic section of the Illinois River from the upstream boundary of the Rogue River National Forest to Lawson Creek, and all associated tributaries, wetlands, small lakes and ponds, Rogue Basin. This designation includes Game Lake and the waters of the Eight Dollar Mountain Botanical Wayside and excludes Deer Creek. See OAR 340-041-0275(4).

(E) Rough and Ready Creek and its associated tributaries, wetlands, springs and lakes, Rogue Basin. See OAR 340-041-0275(4).

(9) Exceptions. The commission or department may grant exceptions to this rule so long as the following procedures are met:

(a) In allowing new or increased discharged loads, the commission or department must make the following findings:

(A) The new or increased discharged load will not cause water quality standards to be violated;

(B) The action is necessary and benefits of the lowered water quality outweigh the environmental costs of the reduced water quality. This evaluation will be conducted in accordance with DEQ's "Antidegradation Policy Implementation Internal Management Directive for NPDES Permits and section 401 water quality certifications," pages 27, and 33-39 (March 2001) incorporated herein by reference; and

(C) The new or increased discharged load will not unacceptably threaten or impair any recognized beneficial uses or adversely affect threatened or endangered species. In making this determination, the commission or department may rely on the presumption that, if the numeric criteria established to protect specific uses are met, the beneficial uses they were designed to protect are protected. In making this determination the commission or department may also evaluate other state and federal agency data that would provide information on potential impacts to beneficial uses for which the numeric criteria have not been set;

(D) The new or increased discharged load may not be granted if the receiving stream is classified as being water quality limited under sub-section (a) of the definition of “Water Quality Limited” in OAR 340-041-0002, unless:

(i) The pollutant parameters associated with the proposed discharge are unrelated either directly or indirectly to the parameter(s) causing the receiving stream to violate water quality standards and being designated water quality limited; or

(ii) Total maximum daily loads (TMDLs), waste load allocations (WLAs) load allocations (LAs), and the reserve capacity have been established for the water quality limited receiving stream, compliance plans under which enforcement action can be taken have been established, and there will be sufficient reserve capacity to assimilate the increased load under the established TMDL at the time of discharge; or

(iii) Effective July 1, 1996, in water bodies designated water-quality limited for dissolved oxygen, when establishing WLAs under a TMDL for water bodies meeting the conditions defined in this rule, the department may at its discretion provide an allowance for WLAs calculated to result in no measurable reduction of dissolved oxygen (DO). For this purpose, "no measurable reduction" is defined as no more than 0.10 mg/L for a single source and no more than 0.20 mg/L for all anthropogenic activities that influence the water quality limited segment. The allowance applies for surface water DO criteria and for Intergravel dissolved oxygen (IGDO) if a determination is made that the conditions are natural. The allowance for WLAs applies only to surface water 30-day and seven-day means; or

(iv) Under extraordinary circumstances to solve an existing, immediate and critical environmental problem, the commission or department may, after completing a TMDL but before the water body has achieved compliance with standards, consider a waste load increase for an existing source on a receiving stream designated water quality limited under sub-section (a) of the definition of “Water Quality Limited” in OAR 340-041-0002. This action must be based on the following conditions:

(I) That TMDLs, WLAs and LAs have been set; and

(II) That a compliance plan under which enforcement actions can be taken has been established and is being implemented on schedule; and

(III) That an evaluation of the requested increased load shows that this increment of load will not have an unacceptable temporary or permanent adverse effect on beneficial uses or adversely affect threatened or endangered species; and

(IV) That any waste load increase granted under subparagraph (iv) of this paragraph is temporary and does not extend beyond the TMDL compliance deadline established for the water body. If this action will result in a permanent load increase, the action must comply with sub-paragraphs (i) or (ii) of this paragraph.

(b) The activity, expansion, or growth necessitating a new or increased discharge load is consistent with the acknowledged local land use plans as a statement of land use compatibility from the appropriate local planning agency establishes.

(c) Oregon's water quality management policies and programs recognize that Oregon's water bodies have a finite capacity to assimilate waste. Unused assimilative capacity is an exceedingly valuable resource that enhances in-stream values and environmental quality in general. Allocation of any unused assimilative capacity should be based on explicit criteria. In addition to the conditions in subsection (a) of this section, the commission or department may consider the following:

(A) Environmental Effects Criteria:

(i) Adverse Out-of-Stream Effects. There may be instances where the non-discharge or limited discharge alternatives may cause greater adverse environmental effects than the increased discharge alternative. An example may be the potential degradation of groundwater from land application of wastes;

(ii) Instream Effects. Total stream loading may be reduced through elimination or reduction of other source discharges or through a reduction in seasonal discharge. A source that replaces other sources, accepts additional waste from less efficient treatment units or systems, or reduces discharge loadings during periods of low stream flow may be permitted an increased discharge load year-round or during seasons of high flow, so long as the loading has no adverse effect on threatened and endangered species;

(iii) Beneficial Effects. Land application, upland wetlands application, or other non-discharge alternatives for appropriately treated wastewater may replenish groundwater levels and increase streamflow and assimilative capacity during otherwise low streamflow periods.

(B) Economic Effects Criteria. When assimilative capacity exists in a stream, and when it is judged that increased loadings will not have significantly greater adverse environmental effects than other alternatives to increased discharge, the economic effect of increased loading will be considered. Economic effects will be of two general types:

(i) Value of Assimilative Capacity. The assimilative capacity of Oregon's streams is finite, but the potential uses of this capacity are virtually unlimited. Thus it is important that priority be given to those beneficial uses that promise the greatest return (beneficial use) relative to the unused assimilative capacity that might be utilized. In-stream uses that will benefit from reserve assimilative capacity, as well as potential future beneficial use, will be weighed against the economic benefit associated with increased loading;

(ii) Cost of Treatment Technology. The cost of improved treatment technology, non-discharge and limited discharge alternatives may be evaluated.

Statutory/Other Authority: ORS 468.020, 468B.030, 468B.035 & 468B.048
Statutes/Other Implemented: ORS 468B.030, 468B.035 & 468B.048
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DEQ 17-2003, f. & cert. ef. 12-9-03

340-041-0275
Basin-Specific Criteria (Rogue): Water Quality Standards and Policies for this Basin

(1) pH (hydrogen ion concentration). pH values may not fall outside the following ranges:

(a) Marine waters: 7.0–8.5;

(b) Estuarine and fresh waters (except Cascade lakes): 6.5–8.5;

(c) Cascade lakes above 3,000 feet altitude: pH values may not fall outside the range of 6.0 to 8.5.

(2) Total Dissolved Solids. Guide concentrations listed below may not be exceeded unless otherwise specifically authorized by DEQ upon such conditions as it may deem necessary to

carry out the general intent of this plan and to protect the beneficial uses set forth in OAR 340-04l-0271: 500.0 mg/l.

(3) Minimum Design Criteria for Treatment and Control of Sewage Wastes:

(a) During periods of low stream flows (approximately May 1 to October 31): Treatment resulting in monthly average effluent concentrations not to exceed 10 mg/l of BOD and 10 mg/l of SS or equivalent control;

(b) During the period of high stream flows (approximately November 1 to April 30): A minimum of secondary treatment or equivalent control and unless otherwise specifically authorized by the Department, operation of all waste treatment and control facilities at maximum practicable efficiency and effectiveness so as to minimize waste discharges to public waters.

(4) The following waters are designated as Outstanding Resource Waters of Oregon (ORWs):

(a) Wild and Scenic Illinois River

(A) The Illinois River from the upstream boundary of the Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest downstream to Nancy Creek;

(B) All named and unnamed tributaries of the Wild and Scenic Illinois River from the National Forest boundary downstream to and including Lawson Creek and excluding Deer Creek; and

(C) All associated wetlands, small lakes and ponds within the watershed associated with (4)(a)(A) and (B), including Game Lake at the headwaters to Horse Sign Creek.

(D) All surface waters within the boundary of the Eight Dollar Mountain Botanical Wayside.

(b) Rough and Ready Creek

(A) All of Rough and Ready Creek including Rough and Ready Lake.

(B) All named and unnamed tributaries, springs, associated wetlands and other waters of the Rough and Ready Creek watershed, except for Parker Creek downstream of its boundary with the Rogue-River Siskiyou National forest.

(c) The following policies will maintain and protect the exceptional water quality, ecological and recreational values and existing and designated uses of the waters listed in (4)(a) or (4)(b) except as altered by natural causes.

(A) No new NPDES discharge or increase of an existing NPDES discharge to the waters listed in (4)(a) or (4)(b) shall be allowed, except a construction stormwater permit may be authorized for projects that will not have more than a short-term water quality impact.

(B) No new NPDES discharge or increase of an existing NPDES discharge to waters upstream or tributary to those listed in (4)(a) shall be allowed if such discharge would lower the water quality of those waters, except as follows:

(i) A construction stormwater permit may be authorized for projects that will not have more than a short-term water quality impact;

(ii) DEQ may authorize new or increased discharges from publicly owned domestic sewage treatment facilities upstream of the waters listed in 4(a) if the following conditions are met:

- **(I) For temperature, insignificant increases no greater than those authorized under OAR 340-041-0028(11) and (12).**
- **(II) For dissolved oxygen, up to a 0.1 mg/l decrease in dissolved oxygen may be allowed consistent with OAR 340-041-0004(3)(d) in the waters listed in (4)(a).**
- **(III) For other pollutants, a reduction of no more than 2.5% of assimilative capacity cumulatively in the waters listed in (4)(a).**
- **(IV) For total suspended solids, an increase of no more than 2.5% cumulatively in the waters listed in (4)(a).**

(C) Any other new discharge to the waters listed in (4)(a) or (4)(b) is prohibited if such discharge would lower the water quality or ecological or recreation values of those waters, except in the following circumstances:

(i) As needed to respond to a public health or safety emergency, including but not limited to wildfire response. The water quality impacts from such responses shall be short term and will be mitigated to the extent practicable.

(ii) As needed in connection with ecological restoration or water quality improvement activities where short term water quality impacts are necessary to obtain long-term restoration or water quality improvements.

Statutory/Other Authority: ORS 468.020, 468B.030, 468B.035 & 468B.048
Statutes/Other Implemented: ORS 468B.030, 468B.035 & 468B.048
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