

Agency Mission: To be a leader in restoring, maintaining and enhancing the quality of Oregon’s air, water and land.

KPM #3/ OBM #10b	PERMIT TIMELINESS: Percentage of individual wastewater discharge permits issued within 270 days.	Measure since: 1992
Goal	IMPROVE OREGON’S AIR AND WATER.	
Oregon Context	KPM #3 is also Oregon Benchmark #10b. It links to: (1) Oregon’s Statewide Planning Goal 6: Air, water, and land resources quality (OAR 660-015-00 (06)); (2) Oregon Shines Goal 1: Quality jobs for all Oregonians, and (3) Oregon Shines Goal 3: Healthy, Sustainable surroundings (Oregon Benchmark 78, Stream Water Quality).	
Data source	Water Quality Program database.	
Owner	DEQ Water Quality Program. Melissa Aerne, (503) 229-5656	

1. OUR STRATEGY

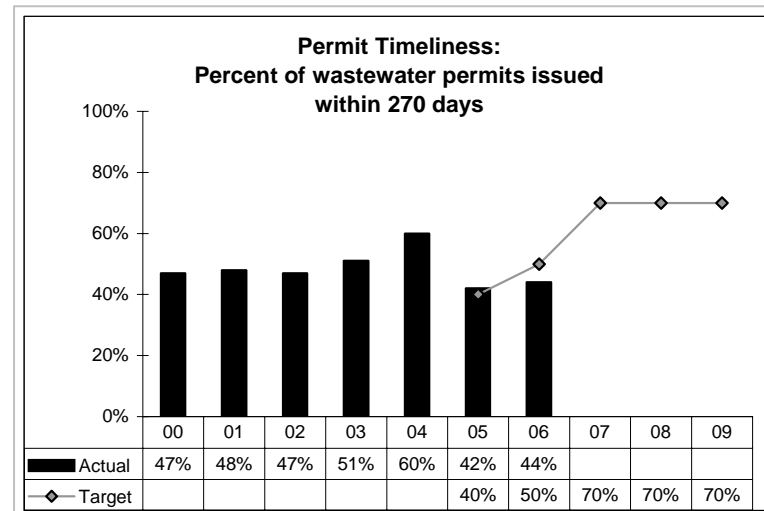
To achieve our timeliness goal, DEQ continues to focus on timely issuance of permits and reducing the permit backlog. DEQ develops permit issuance plans based on a watershed approach, and continues to make improvements in the permitting program.

2. ABOUT THE TARGETS

The target sets a standard for issuing permits in a timely manner because businesses need quick turn-around times on permits to construct, expand or modify their operations. High percentages of permits issued in a timely manner indicate an efficient program.

3. HOW WE ARE DOING

DEQ did not meet its 2006 target for timeliness. In 2004, DEQ was able to issue 60% of its individual wastewater permits within 270 days because we temporarily diverted staff from other important program activities, including permit compliance and enforcement, in order to focus on reducing the backlog of expired water quality permits. However, during 2005 and 2006, DEQ needed to shift focus back onto other difficult permit issues, such as incorporating Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) into permits, transitioning to issuing permits on a watershed basis, and litigation. DEQ also experienced significant staff turnover. As a result, in 2005 permit timeliness dropped to 42% (although DEQ still exceeded its target of 40% that year) and in 2006, timeliness remained relatively stable at 44% percent.



The target for 2006 increased to 50% of wastewater permits issued within 270 days. To account for every permit applied in a given year, each year’s data is available 270 days after December 31; final 2006 data was not available until September 27, 2007. During the 2007 Legislature, DEQ reported that as of March 28, 2007, we had issued 50% of wastewater permit applications that had been received during calendar year

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2006 within 270 days. That data represented just part of the reporting period. Once all data became available on September 27, 2007, the permit timeliness changed from the 50% DEQ reported in March 2007 to 44%.

4. HOW WE COMPARE

There are no formal public or private industry standards for permit issuance, although there is a clear expectation that permits be issued in a timely manner.

5. FACTORS AFFECTING RESULTS

DEQ has been working with a stakeholder group known as the "Blue Ribbon Committee" to identify long-term improvements to the wastewater permitting program. As a result, DEQ is moving to a watershed approach that will allow the agency to better plan for workload and resource needs in the Water Quality permit program. This approach will likely delay some permit renewals because they will be rescheduled to fit into a watershed cycle. The complexities of technical and legal issues encountered during permit development also affect permit timeliness. Similarly, permit actions are frequently subject to legal challenges that require the assistance of technical staff. These activities require resources to be pulled away from on-going permit renewal requirements causing delays.

The Blue Ribbon Committee recommended that DEQ ensure stable, ongoing funding that improves fee predictability for rate payers and revenue for budget management. This is accomplished by maintaining a mix of fee and public funding and allowing for up to a 3% annual permit fee increase to help address increased permit program costs. The initial phase of this effort increased wastewater permit fee revenue by 11% as approved by the 2005 Legislature to maintain funding for four existing permit staff and added 2.5 new positions in 2006 and 2007. These new positions assisted DEQ in more efficiently assessing compliance. In the next phase, DEQ received approval from the 2007 Legislature to increase fee revenue by 5% to support three new positions for the development of up-to-date and consistent permits, and improved timeliness of compliance and enforcement of permit violations. In 2007, DEQ also implemented an annual permit fee increase of 3% as authorized by the 2005 Legislature through Senate Bill 45, effective for the 2008 Fiscal Year (July 1, 2007 to June 30, 2008). The 3% revenue increase does not fully cover cost increases.

6. WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

To help meet the permit timeliness goal, DEQ needs to concentrate on hiring and retaining qualified staff, so that the necessary resources will be available to issue water quality permits. Additionally, DEQ will be improving the process for incorporating TMDLs into permits, possibly through the development of an Internal Management Directive.

7. ABOUT THE DATA

The reporting cycle is the calendar year. Due to the 270-day target timeline, data for each calendar year is reported at the end of the 3rd quarter the following year.