



**Oregon**  
Department  
of Agriculture

# News Release

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**Contacts:**

OR Dept. of Forestry: [Nick Hennemann](#), Salem, 503-945-7248

OR Dept. of Environmental Quality: [Dick Pedersen](#), Portland, 503-229-5300

OR Dept. of Land Conservation and Development: [Patty Snow](#), Salem, 503-934-0052

OR Dept. of Agriculture: [Bruce Pokarney](#), Salem, 503-986-4559

## **EPA and NOAA propose disapproval of Oregon's coastal area pollution program**

*Final federal decision expected in 2014*

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration are expected to announce tomorrow that they will propose disapproving Oregon's program to address polluted runoff along the Oregon Coast. Although the state of Oregon has addressed nearly every issue raised by the federal agencies, and water quality and coho habitat have been improving for the past 15 years, differences remain over Oregon's forest practices rules.

"We're disappointed in EPA and NOAA's decision to proceed with this proposed action," said Richard Whitman, natural resources policy advisor for Gov. John Kitzhaber. "Oregon is a national leader in improving water quality, and Gov. Kitzhaber is committed to maintaining that record."

Most coastal states, including Oregon, must operate a program to reduce pollution from nonpoint sources such as forestry, agriculture and urban stormwater. Federal approval of these programs is required for states to receive federal grants to help pay program costs. Currently, Oregon and 10 other states have coastal pollution control programs that are conditionally approved – meaning that some elements of the program have been approved, while other elements are being worked on and improved to meet federal standards.

"Oregon is committed to achieving the very same environmental outcomes EPA and NOAA want to achieve: clean water and healthy fisheries," said Dick Pedersen, director of Oregon's Department of Environmental Quality. "Water quality trends across most of the state are positive, and Oregon is already successfully restoring salmon runs and maintaining coastal watershed health."

Federal law requires EPA and NOAA to approve or disapprove Oregon's program based on the state's commitments to implementing specific pollution management measures rather than looking at whether a state's program is actually succeeding on the ground. State officials maintain that EPA and NOAA, in their proposed ruling, are asking the state to adopt one-size-fits-all measures that are not tailored to preventing problems or to addressing specific issues in specific watersheds.

"EPA and NOAA's proposal not only threatens more-effective pollution reduction methods for Oregon, but also jeopardizes approximately \$4 million per year in federal funding for dozens of local watershed improvement projects, said Whitman.

Oregon is encouraging the public, including its watershed and community partners, to comment on EPA and NOAA's proposal. Public comments should be sent by March 21 to: Joelle Gore, Acting Chief, Coastal Programs Division (N/ORM3), Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management, NOS, NOAA, 1305 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, Maryland, 20910, phone (301) 713-3155, x177, or by email [joelle.gore@noaa.gov](mailto:joelle.gore@noaa.gov).

**Next steps:** Over the next six months, the state and federal agencies will continue to explore ways to meet federal requirements in ways that will work in Oregon. EPA and NOAA are expected to review comments and make a final decision in spring 2014. Cuts in federal funds could begin as early as July 2014.

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