

Date: Sept. 9, 2020

To: Environmental Quality Commission

From: Richard Whitman, Director

Subject: Item B: The State of Oregon's Environment (Informational)
Sept. 17-18, 2020, EQC meeting

Why this is important DEQ collects and reports on a large range of environmental data. At this meeting, DEQ is providing a high-level overview of the status and trends for some key measures of Oregon's environment. Going forward, as DEQ develops a new strategic plan, the agency wants to link key goals in the plan with measures that are reported to the commission and others on a regular basis.

Prior EQC involvement DEQ provided a report to the commission on the state of Oregon's environment at the May 2019 EQC meeting.

Background DEQ's mission is to be a leader in restoring, maintaining and enhancing the quality of Oregon's air, water and land. To carry out our mission, DEQ collects a large range of data on the status of and trends in Oregon's air, land and water quality. These data, and the measures they support, are important in helping us focus our collective efforts to continue improving Oregon's environment.

There are three types of measures DEQ uses to track Oregon's environmental health:

- Key Performance Measures
- Environmental Council of the States measures
- DEQ measures for outcome-based management

DEQ reports Key Performance Measures to the Oregon Legislature, which the Legislature uses to assess agency performance. DEQ uses some of these measures to track environmental outcomes annually or biennially.

The Environmental Council of the States, ECOS, is the national non-profit, non-partisan association of state and territorial environmental agency leaders. Oregon participates in the ECOS common measure project, which is an interactive web tool displaying measures that are tracked at the state level across the nation. This project is intended to communicate public health, environmental progress, and economic impact over time.

DEQ tracks a set of measures for outcome-based management, and reports on them in quarterly performance review meetings. Although most measures are reported quarterly, some, such as the environmental outcome measures, are reported on annually or less often.

Environmental data are key to measuring environmental outcomes. DEQ's laboratory collects water and air quality data that serve as the foundation for the measures utilized by the media programs. Lab data are used to track core work outcomes such as *Monitoring the environment over time*, *Protecting human health and vulnerable communities*, and *Engaging partners and citizen science*. The laboratory manages the collected data as well as data shared by partners and makes it available through our state data systems. We also exchange these data to federal databases, achieving broader public availability. In addition to being utilized directly by the air and water quality programs, the laboratory produces public information from our data including online web applications, such as the Air Quality Index, technical summary reports and visual information.

The agency collects air quality data for purposes that include the following: to monitor levels of criteria pollutants for which EPA has established health-based standards, to report an aggregate Air Quality Index that represents healthy or unhealthy days, to report area-wide air toxics trends, to track trends in regional haze (which is a measure of visibility in our protected lands), and track greenhouse gas emissions data that allow us to gage our progress towards Oregon's climate goals.

DEQ collects water quality data directly, and from partner organizations including federal agencies, local government entities, watershed councils, and others. These data are used in permitting particular facilities, in regular reporting to the federal Environmental Protection Agency, in developing water quality standards, and in developing and implementing Total Maximum Daily Loads, also known as TMDLs, or Clean Water Plans.

Land quality measures included in this report include the number of acres of contaminated sites that have been cleaned up and reclaimed for reuse, and data regarding the amount of waste generated annually in Oregon, and the amount of waste recovered through recycling.

Presentation content

This item's presentation includes a summary of some of the metrics that DEQ currently uses to gage the status and trends in Oregon's environment, an overview of DEQ's data collection and management systems, and an introductory discussion of how the agency intends to link this reporting in future years with its development of a new strategic plan.

Key issues This presentation will show areas where public health and the environment are improving, and areas where there are concerns. DEQ staff will talk about the data and results, and invite questions from the commission. DEQ is seeking feedback from the commission about the measures, as well as the results.

EQC involvement There is no EQC action associated with this agency information. DEQ will bring regular updates on this topic to the commission.

Report compiled from program information