

## Oregon Water Quality Standards Review and Revision Priorities



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Environmental  
Quality

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In 2017, the Department of Environmental Quality developed a list of priority water quality standards projects for the agency to initiate from 2017-2020. Priority projects include standards revisions conducted through rulemaking, as well as development and refinement of implementation procedures.

### What do water quality standards do?

Water quality standards designate uses for Oregon water bodies and establish criteria to protect water quality for those uses. Examples of water body uses are fish and aquatic life, fish consumption and recreation.



*Spawning salmon on the Lostine River.*

### Why were potential revisions to water quality standards being reviewed?

DEQ reviews and revises water quality standards for several reasons. Some revisions are made to incorporate new science, or to improve water quality protection. Other revisions ensure that Oregon's water quality standards comply with federal Clean Water Act regulations or consider the Endangered Species Act recommendations. Standards revisions or procedures also can help DEQ staff be more consistent and efficient when writing permits, or allow DEQ to consider site-specific conditions.

### What are the priority water quality standards projects?

DEQ determined that the following projects were priorities to begin by 2020:

- A multiple discharger variance in the Willamette Basin and individual variances

for four municipal discharges that will allow permits to include achievable mercury effluent limits while requiring mercury reductions (underway).

- A Cold Water Refuge Plan for the lower Willamette River, required by ESA consultation (underway).
- Minor clarifications to use definitions applicable to the dissolved oxygen standard.
- Updates to fish and aquatic life use designations based on updated scientific information.
- A strategy to address waters where natural temperatures exceed applicable water quality standards.
- An evaluation of the need to adopt EPA-recommended criteria for four toxic substances to protect aquatic life.

A table with an estimated schedule for these projects is included on the second page of this Fact Sheet.

### What did DEQ consider in prioritizing these projects?

DEQ considered whether the project would improve the efficiency and effectiveness of DEQ's water quality programs, like permitting and pollution reduction plans. DEQ also considered the environmental benefit that would result from the work. Finally, DEQ considered external requirements, like court findings and federal agency decisions.

### For more information please contact:

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### Alternative formats

Documents can be provided upon request in an alternative format for individuals with disabilities or in a language other than English for people with limited English skills. To request a document in another format or language, call DEQ in Portland at 503-229-5696, or toll-free in Oregon at 1-800-452-4011, ext. 5696; or email [deqinfo@deq.state.or.us](mailto:deqinfo@deq.state.or.us)

**Table: DEQ's Highest Priority Water Quality Standards Projects: 2017-2020.**

Project	2017	2018	2019	2020
1. Multiple Discharger Variance for Mercury	←→			
2. Clean Water Services Variances for Mercury	←→			
3. Lower Willamette Cold Water Refuge Plan	←→			
4. Dissolved Oxygen Clarifications		←→		
5. Fish and Aquatic Life Use Updates		←→		
6. Temperature Strategy	←→			
7. New aquatic life 304(a) criteria evaluation				←→

Find more detail at DEQ's Water Quality Standards website: <http://www.oregon.gov/deq/wq/Pages/WQ-Standards.aspx>