



State of Oregon Department of Environmental Quality

Basin Naming Conventions

There are two basin naming conventions in use at DEQ: the one developed by Oregon WRD (Water Resources Department) and the other developed by USGS. The table below provides more information on each.

A Comparison of Basin Naming Conventions Used at DEQ

Question	WRD Basins	USGS Basins
When do we use these basin names?	<p>Used in the Oregon Administrative Rules. Used to determine the water quality standards that apply to a particular permit.</p> <p>NOTE: for permit holders that discharge directly to the Columbia, the applicable basin standards are those listed for the Main Stem Columbia River in OAR 340-041-0104.</p>	Used to delineate the area covered by a TMDL.
Why do we use this system?	<p>The OAR is based on this system. Water quality standards for some parameters (especially pH and TDS) vary by WRD basin, as do minimum design criteria for treatment and control of sewage wastes.</p>	<p>A large body of GIS data has been developed based on this system. The basin boundaries coincide with hydrologic boundaries. This system defines basins on multiple scales (4th field HUC down to 6th field HUC)</p>
Why can't we JUST use this system?	<p>The WRD basin boundaries do not always coincide with hydrologic boundaries. The WRD system doesn't work for GIS applications because GIS data has been developed with respect to the USGS system.</p>	The OAR is based on the WRD system.
How are these systems alike?	The following basins are basically the same within both systems: Willamette, John Day, Deschutes and Klamath.	
What are the differences?	There are lots! For one thing, the WRD system has 19 basins, all located entirely within Oregon. Only the Willamette has subbasins defined for it: the Lower, Middle and Upper. The USGS system by contrast, has 15 basins and 93 subbasins, not all of which fall entirely in Oregon.	
What will happen if I confuse these two systems?	There are a number of names common to both systems, but the areas that they refer to don't match. These include Umatilla, Powder and Umpqua. There are other names that sound similar but that cover different areas. These include North Coast and Northern Oregon Coastal as well as South Coast and Southern Oregon Coastal. The attached map illustrates these differences.	

