



Fact Sheet

Focused Ag Solutions Planning

The Department of Environmental Quality is the lead recipient of a \$6 million grant as part of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Columbia River Basin Restoration Funding Assistance Program. The Columbia River Basin Toxic Reduction Lead Grant will support a partnership with the Oregon Department of Agriculture to develop Focused Ag Solutions Plans for three key sub-basins to address mercury contributions to waterways from agricultural lands. ODA uses Focused Ag Solutions as strategic outreach and education efforts to implement practices for reducing erosion from agricultural lands. The Focused Ag Solutions process includes evaluating conditions on agricultural lands, engaging landowners to address water quality concerns on their land, and monitoring to evaluate outcomes of practices to reduce erosion and runoff effectively.

About this project

This project aims to reduce mercury discharges from agricultural lands in the Willamette River Basin and make progress towards meeting required mercury total maximum daily load, known as TMDL, reductions. ODA will work with the Oregon State University Extension Service to identify Focused Ag Solutions and develop public education materials to achieve this goal. These solutions will include practices such as improving riparian buffers, upgrading irrigation efficiency, and planting cover crops. ODA will implement these practices in three new areas and potentially expand to six additional sub-basins in the Willamette River Basin. ODA will create a public data portal to report improvements in real time.



What is a TMDL?

The Total Maximum Daily Load, or clean water plan, is a science-based approach to cleaning up polluted water to meet state water quality standards. A TMDL is a numerical value that represents the highest amount of a pollutant a surface water body can receive and still meet the standards. The federal Clean Water Act requires states or EPA to develop a TMDL for each water body on the state's polluted waters list, also known as the 303(d) list ([Integrated Report](#)). The TMDL process is just one strategy used to clean up polluted waters.

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Benefits to communities

DEQ and ODA are committed to addressing environmental impacts and burdens to communities throughout Oregon. Toxic contamination of fish and water in the Basin creates a disproportionately high health risk for Tribal people and other people who consume high amounts of fish. Actions to prevent mercury from entering and spreading in Oregon waters will help recover native fish populations and allow people to eat more traditional amounts of fish without being exposed to disproportionately high levels of contamination. Additionally, project outreach will include engagement with women-owned and Hispanic-owned farm/ranch operations, farmers and ranchers early in their careers, and farmers and ranchers in rural communities.

Project outcomes

This funding will enable the participating implementation areas to increase the number of projects and Focused Ag Solutions Plans implemented with willing landowners. As a result of implementation in the short-term, DEQ and ODA anticipate a 5% reduction in sediment discharges from agricultural lands, and a 5% reduction in mercury loads from agricultural lands in the implementation areas.

This project's long-term (5-20 years or longer) goal is to meet mercury water quality standards and achieve Willamette Basin TMDL allocations for erosion and runoff from agricultural areas.



For more information

Contact ODA's Agricultural Water Quality Management Program to learn more about this project:

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