

Fact Sheet

Columbia River Basin Toxic Reduction Lead Grant

In January 2024, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency selected the Department of Environmental Quality for a \$6 million Toxics Reduction Lead Grant through the Columbia River Basin Restoration Funding Assistance Program to prevent, reduce, and clean up toxics in Oregon's portion of the Columbia River Basin over five years. The grant activities will safeguard waterways, clean up distressed properties, and address per- and polyfluorinated, known as PFAS, compounds to protect human and environmental health. The federal grant will also foster partnerships for innovative toxics reduction efforts to protect human health and the health of Oregon's land, air, and water resources.

Key partnerships to reduce pesticides and mercury

DEQ is partnering with the Oregon Department of Agriculture on two projects that will address water quality concerns related to agricultural lands. Through their local partners, [ODA](#) and [DEQ's Pesticide Stewardship Partnership Program](#) will provide increased education, outreach and technical assistance to increase voluntary adoption of best practices to keep pesticides on-site and out of the aquatic environment. To meet mercury load reduction requirements in the [Willamette Basin Mercury Total Maximum Daily Load](#), ODA will also identify three key sub-basins for focused education and outreach efforts to implement solutions for reducing erosion from agricultural lands. Methods and materials from this effort could be expanded to additional areas in the Willamette Basin.



DEQ also partnered with the University of Oregon's [Resource Assistance for Rural Environments \(RARE\) AmeriCorps Program](#) to place RARE members in rural communities in the Willamette Basin. Members provided technical assistance and implemented projects to reduce unpermitted stormwater contributions of mercury and potentially other toxic pollutants.

DEQ-led projects

Small-Scale Distressed Property Cleanups

DEQ's Environmental Cleanup Program will select up to 10 locations in the Columbia River Basin for cleanup to address legacy toxic contamination. DEQ will prioritize sites that have the most significant potential benefits to

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water quality in low-income communities or those that have been disproportionately impacted by toxics. Successful cleanup projects will remove sources of toxics and facilitate redevelopment for community benefits such as affordable housing and greenspace.

PFAS Strategic Plan

The grant funding supported completion of DEQ's statewide PFAS Strategic Plan and will support priority early implementation actions. PFAS, known as "forever chemicals," accumulate in the environment and tissues of wildlife and humans. The Plan evaluates actions required to address PFAS, such as rulemaking, identifying PFAS alternatives, technical assistance, and pollution prevention.

Benefits to communities

DEQ and its partners are committed to addressing environmental impacts and burdens to communities throughout Oregon. For example, 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 pollutants 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, grant funding will be directed toward communities most affected by pollutants, with an emphasis on cleanups in areas facing historical neglect.



Project outcomes

The projects aim to improve water quality in Oregon's portion of the Columbia River Basin by reducing pollutants like pesticides and mercury. They'll target both groundwater and surface water contamination through cleanups and prepare properties for redevelopment for community benefit. Additionally, DEQ plans to tackle PFAS contamination through prevention, alternative solutions, community guidance, and public education on its health and environmental risks.

For more information

Fact sheets for each project supported by the grant can be found on [DEQ's website](#). Contact DEQ's Columbia River Basin Toxic Reduction Lead Grant Coordinator to learn more about this project:

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