Supporting communities during COVID-19

DEQ's Clean Water State Revolving Fund project officers, engineers, managers and other staff are here to support loan applicants and borrowers during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. In this issue, we highlight ways in which DEQ and other agencies are helping communities maintain water quality.

Financial resources

The CWSRF loan fund is currently forecast to meet Oregon's demand for water quality infrastructure funding for the next 20 years, and we will continue to accept loan applications as usual. It is not clear whether the federal government will provide infrastructure stimulus funding to help those affected by the economic impacts of the pandemic. DEQ will reach out to existing applicants and borrowers if any new funds become available. Sign up for Gov Delivery for the latest program information.

CWSRF borrowers who have financial concerns related to their loan should contact Kathy Estes, Loan Specialist, at estes.kathy@deq.state.or.us or 503-229-6814.

Safety

Because of physical distancing and other measures, CWSRF is providing alternatives to certain project requirements:

- Documents with scanned original signatures are now allowable
- Virtual or photographic site inspections can be arranged
- Virtual loan signing meetings may be available
- Adobe Sign online signature program will be implemented for all loan related forms mid-summer.

If you have questions or concerns, please contact your project officer.
Operator’s certification assistance

Wastewater operators are allowed extra time to earn Continuing Education Units, thanks to the Environmental Quality Commission. The EQC passed emergency rules that extend certain DEQ issued licenses and certifications until the earliest of either October 15, 2020 or 60 days after the date on which the COVID-19 State of Emergency is no longer in effect. This provides operators with extra time to obtain CEUs. Online training is still available and links are provided here: https://www.oesac.org/Courses.

Oregon law requires owners of domestic wastewater systems to have their systems under the responsible control and direction of certified operators. Trained and certified operators are necessary to protect public health and the environment. Many in-person opportunities to attain the 2.0 Continuing Education Units that are required for certification renewal were cancelled or postponed because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

DEQ emailed operators whose certificates expire June 30, 2020, with information on the extension and how to renew. Operators may download and print the generic renewal form PDF located on the program web page in the Program Information section. Operators should renew as soon as possible. The website will be updated as new information becomes available. Questions? Email opcert@deq.state.or.us.

Get the protection you need

Supply Connector is Business Oregon’s collaborative project to connect businesses and communities with Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) manufacturers and suppliers to fight the spread of COVID-19 and keep employees safe. This tool provides a searchable database of businesses that can help provide PPE. The Oregon Office of Emergency Management provides more resources online.

Clean Water Services: local research for a global problem

Clean Water Services is collaborating on two research projects to track COVID-19 in sewage, assisting public health experts to determine whether the virus is in a community. Using new analytical techniques, researchers are able to find evidence of the virus at the neighborhood scale. The researchers are looking for signs of the virus in sewage, not the virus itself. For information about worker and facility safety during the pandemic visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention online.
Water and Wastewater Agency Response Network

The Water and Wastewater Agency Response Network helps utilities get personnel, equipment, materials and associated services to restore critical operations impacted by any type of emergency. Utilities can find contact information for their WARN on each state’s website or can contact EPA via email. EPA’s Pandemic Incident Action Checklist is comprised of three different checklists that can help water utilities with pandemic preparation, response and recovery. Each checklist provides examples of actions that drinking water and wastewater systems can take.

Rural community assistance

The Rural Community Assistance Partnership is offering technical assistance and training relating to COVID-19 response for your water or wastewater system. For information contact info@rcap.org or visit https://www.rcap.org/.

Below-market interest rates keep projects affordable

The CWSRF always offers below-market interest rates, with some loans at less than 1%. Our current interest rates are the lowest the program has ever offered. If the U.S. Treasury Department’s 20-year bond rate continues to decrease, we may be able to offer even lower rates next quarter, which starts July 1, 2020. Interest rates and other financial terms vary by loan type and repayment period. Rates are adjusted quarterly, based on the average Bond Buyer rates of the previous quarter, as published by the Federal Reserve. Once a loan is signed, the interest rate is fixed for the life of the loan. If a fee is charged, the amount is equal to 0.5% of the unpaid balance, and is collected once annually. Current rates are available on the CWSRF website.

Planning for the next emergency

Even while coping with the pandemic, communities may be thinking about how to prepare for future emergencies, such as flooding. The Clean Water State Revolving Fund finances planning efforts to keep water infrastructure ready for whatever may come. This could include seismic upgrades, energy or water conservation, public education and more. Below-market rate loans are also available for restoring facilities damaged by natural disasters or other events. Contact the CWSRF to find out how we can help.

By financing their SE Interceptor project through the CWSRF, the city of Bend saved their community money with a below-market interest rate loan.
MISSION STATEMENT
Oregon’s Clean Water State Revolving Fund program supports communities by funding projects that improve water quality and environmental outcomes for the State of Oregon. The program is dedicated to working with small communities and on projects that increase financial and environmental sustainability, climate resiliency and water and energy efficiency.
- Program Charter

Clean Water State Revolving Fund Contacts

**Northwest Region**
Covering the counties of: Clackamas, Clatsop, Columbia, Multnomah, Washington and Tillamook

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**Western Region**
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**Eastern Region**
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Upcoming events

**Clean Water State Revolving Fund**
2020 deadlines for receiving applications at DEQ by 11:59 p.m. Pacific Time of the due date:*

AUGUST 14, 2020
DECEMBER 14, 2020

*An additional review will be scheduled if five or more applications are received between set deadlines

**Oregon Brownfields and Infrastructure Summit**
OCT 5-6 VIRTUAL CONFERENCE
The second annual summit brings together case studies, financing options and creative problem solving for water, transportation and energy infrastructure challenges statewide.
https://theoregonsummit.com/

Environmental Protection Agency
EPA is offering monthly sessions about American Iron and Steel requirements.

JUNE 24 (11AM):
NATIONAL DE MINIMIS WAIVER

Specific days to be announced:

JULY 2020:
AIS CERTIFICATION LETTERS

AUG. 2020:
USDA, AIS, AND CO-FUNDED PROJECTS

SEP. 2020:
PROJECT/PRODUCT SPECIFIC WAIVERS

OCT. 2020:
NATIONAL MINOR COMPONENTS WAIVER

Registration and information are available from EPA.

Accessibility
DEQ can provide documents in an alternate format or in a language other than English upon request. Call DEQ at 800-452-4011 or email deqinfo@deq.state.or.us.