



Fact Sheet

Oregon 2024 Water Quality Standards Triennial Review

The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality is preparing the 2024 Water Quality Standard Triennial Review. The triennial review is required under the Clean Water Act and is a report and workplan outlining DEQ's priorities when developing water quality standards. It also includes a workplan listing priority water quality standards projects that DEQ plans to initiate or complete between January 2025 and December 2027. Prior to finalizing the workplan, DEQ invites the public to comment on it.

Why does the triennial review matter?

The federal Clean Water Act requires states to review water quality standards and hold a public hearing at least once every three years. This process is called the Water Quality Standards Triennial Review. DEQ reviews and revises water quality standards for several reasons. Revisions may be needed to incorporate new scientific information and improve use protection, to comply with federal regulations, or to clarify procedures to implement existing standards. Developing new internal procedures may be necessary to help DEQ staff consistently and efficiently apply the standards in DEQ's water quality programs, such as permitting.

What are water quality standards?

Water quality standards set the environmental protection goals for waterbodies by designating the beneficial uses of each water body to be protected and establishing numeric or narrative criteria that must be met to support and protect beneficial uses. A beneficial use could be fish and aquatic life and water contact recreation, among others. Water quality standards are the foundation for other Clean Water Act programs and form the basis for assessing impaired waters, regulating the discharge of pollutants, and developing improvement plans, such as TMDLs. More information about Oregon's water quality standards may be found on the [Water Quality Standards web page](#).

What are the types of reviews and revisions DEQ might undertake?

The triennial review workplan may prioritize reviews and revisions like:

- Revisions to water quality criteria or other water quality standard rules to incorporate new scientific information or U.S. Environmental Protection Agency recommendations.
- Updates to maps and tables that identify where and when designated uses occur, or to antidegradation policies that ensure water quality is protected.
- Procedures to apply narrative standards to use the latest scientific methods and improve consistency.

What does DEQ consider in prioritizing potential projects?

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DEQ considers the environmental, human health and environmental justice benefit that would result from a project, as well as whether the project would improve the efficiency and effectiveness of DEQ's water quality programs, such as permitting and pollution reduction. DEQ also considers urgency, such as external requirements from court orders, legislative directives, and federal agency decisions. Finally, DEQ considers public comment to finalize priority projects and the workplan.

What projects are proposed?

The workplan proposes high priority water quality projects to start or complete between 2025 and 2027. This includes four projects to be completed, one potential high priority project and eight proposed high priority projects to start. You can read the full workplan on DEQ's [Triennial Review web page](#).

Proposed high priority projects in the workplan include:

- Developing methodologies and procedures for using narrative criteria for sedimentation.
- Mapping areas where DEQ applies dissolved oxygen spawning criteria for resident trout.
- Review designated uses for specific constructed canals for reuse of treated wastewater.
- Review situations where natural temperature conditions exceed criteria.
- Develop a protective temperature target for native cool-water species in the Malheur River basin.
- Designate several water bodies as Outstanding Resource Waters.

What are the next steps in the process?

DEQ will be accepting public comment on a draft workplan from Oct. 14, 2024 to Dec. 6, 2024. The public comment period will include an informational webinar and a public hearing. Following the public comment period, DEQ may revise the workplan, and publish a final workplan in early 2025. DEQ plans to present the final workplan to the Environmental Quality Commission, DEQ's governing body. Find information about how to provide public comment and attend the informational meeting and hearing in the Public Notice.

Non-discrimination statement

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