

## Oregon Water Quality Standards 2021 Triennial Review



State of Oregon  
Department of  
Environmental  
Quality

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*DEQ is a leader in restoring, maintaining and enhancing the quality of Oregon's air, land and water.*

The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality completed the 2021 water quality standard triennial review. DEQ invited the public to comment on a list of priority water quality standards projects for the agency to initiate over the next three years. The Triennial Review is required by the Clean Water Act and it does not result in water quality standards changes, but the report and work plan outline the rulemaking and other projects DEQ plans to complete or initiate between July 2021 and June 2024.

### What are water quality standards?

Water quality standards designate the beneficial uses of each water body to be protected. For example, beneficial uses include fish and aquatic life and water contact recreation, among others. The standards also establish numeric or narrative criteria that must be met to support and protect the designated uses. Water quality standards are the goals for the waterbody and are the foundations for other Clean Water Act programs. Water quality standards are used to assess waters, regulate the discharge of pollutants and develop improvement plans, such as TMDLs, which are the total amount of pollution allowed while still protecting beneficial uses. More information about Oregon's water quality standards may be found on the [Water Quality Standards](#) webpage.

### Why did DEQ conduct a water quality standards triennial review?

The federal Clean Water Act requires states to review water quality standards and hold a public hearing at least 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 respond to Endangered Species Act consultations. Developing new procedures may be necessary to help DEQ staff consistently and efficiently apply the standards in water quality programs, such as writing permits.



*Metolius River, Oregon*

### What are the types of reviews and revisions DEQ will undertake?

Reviews and revisions fall into categories like:

- Updates to rule language or maps that identify where and when fish and aquatic life uses occur.
- Criteria revisions to incorporate new scientific information or EPA recommendations.
- Site specific criteria to incorporate site-specific information.
- Procedures to apply narrative standards to use the latest scientific methods and improve consistency.
- Corrections and clarifications.

### What has DEQ considered in prioritizing potential projects?

DEQ has considered the environmental and human health benefit that would result from the 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 considered external requirements such as court findings and federal agency decisions. Finally, DEQ considered public comment to finalize priority projects and the work plan.

**Where can a detailed description of the Triennial Review process and priority projects be found?**

For quick reference, the water quality standards projects to be taken on during 2021 to 2024 can be found in Table 1 below. Detailed information can be found in the report: “Water Quality Standards Triennial Review Report and 2021–2024 Work Plan.” This document may be found on DEQ’s [Water Quality Standards Triennial Review](#) webpage.

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**Alternative formats**

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](mailto:deqinfo@deq.state.or.us).

**Table 1. DEQ’s Water Quality Standards Work Plan July 2021 through June 2024**

Project	2021	2022	2023	2024
Update Fish and Aquatic Life Use Designations	←————→			
Aquatic Life Use Definition Clarifications	←————→			
pH for Crooked River	————→			
Variance Procedures	←——→			
Temperature or other Requested Variances and Use Attainability Analyses/Site-Specific Criteria		————→		
Revise Aquatic Life Toxics Criteria	————→			
Update Antidegradation Internal Management Directive	▨——→			
Biocriteria Application Procedures		————→		
Ocean Acidification & Hypoxia: Assessment, Background Work	————→			
Toxics Narrative Criterion Application Procedures		————→		
Excessive Growth Narrative Criterion Application Procedures		————→		
Sedimentation Application Procedures			————→	
Background Review of Human Health Toxics Criteria			▨——→	
Revise Designated Uses for Constructed Waterways			▨——→	

Note: Projects with solid arrows will be initiated or completed during the next three years. Projects with dashed arrows will be initiated as time allows.