

# Powder River TMDL for *E. coli*

## Oregon Department of Agriculture TMDL Implementation Plan

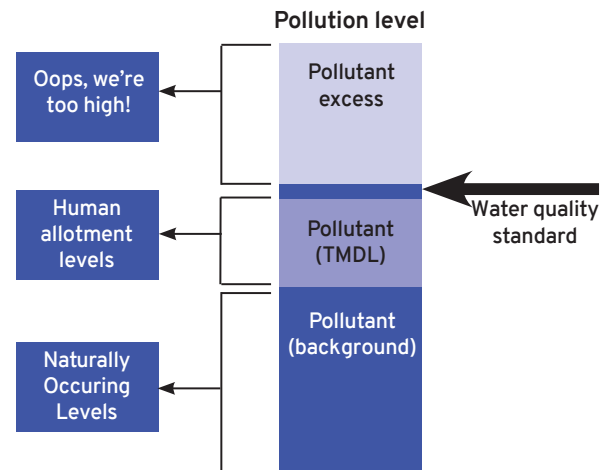


### What is a TMDL?

A Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL), or clean water plan, is a science-based approach to cleaning up polluted water so that it meets 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 water quality standard.

The bacteria water quality standard is a statewide standard, which is not specific to the basin. The bacteria standard in the Powder Basin is the same standard in Southern and Western Oregon.

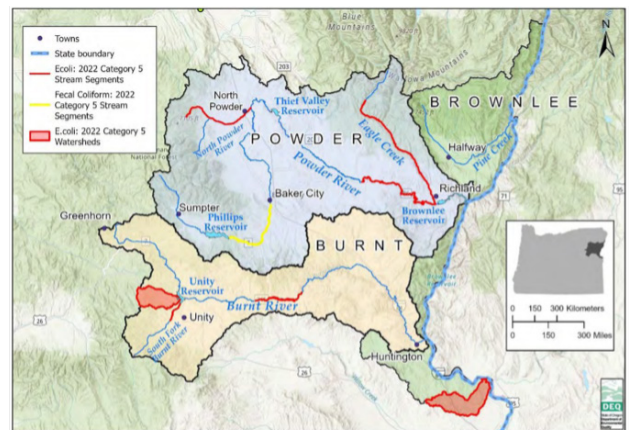
The federal Clean Water Act requires states to develop TMDLs for each water body on the state's polluted waters list, also known as the 303(d) list. The TMDL process is just one strategy used to clean up polluted waters.



### What is the Powder River Basin TMDL for *E. coli*?

The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) has developed a TMDL rule for all freshwater perennial and intermittent streams in the Powder River Basin that addresses pollution of surface waters by human and animal feces. The rule focuses on a specific type of fecal indicator bacteria, *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*) that indicates sources originating from humans and other warm-blooded animals. The presence of *E. coli* in streams poses health risks for people, pets, livestock, and wildlife that use the waters within the basin for recreational contact, consumption, and irrigation.

*E. coli* reductions needed in the Powder River Basin range from 40 percent to 90 percent.



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## What is ODA's role in TMDL Implementation?

The Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) regulates agricultural activities on private lands that can affect water quality in Oregon waters. ODA supervises 38% of lands in the Powder River Basin. In addition to ODA's implementation of the Oregon Agricultural Water Quality program (Area Rules and Powder-Brownlee and the Burnt River Area Plans), ODA is the designated management agency responsible for developing and implementing management strategies to reduce *E. coli* contributions to surface waters from agricultural lands and activities in the Powder River Basin.

ODA's goal is to work together with the agricultural community to answer questions and create voluntary, site specific practices for reducing bacteria, while considering the financial impact on producers.

ODA is working collaboratively with local partners and other designated management agencies to assess the current water quality in the basin. Additional water quality monitoring, including DNA testing, will help us identify the best solutions and guide the implementation process.

## What is in the Powder River Basin TMDL Implementation Plan?

ODA's Powder River Basin TMDL Implementation Plan for *E. coli* is made up of 17 strategies to make progress in reducing *E. coli* pollution. Strategies are grouped into three categories:

- Communications and focused activities
- Monitoring and assessment
- Compliance

Each Strategy is defined with goals to obtain within a specific time frame. Every year, ODA submits an annual report to DEQ as to progress with the Implementation Plan; and every fifth year ODA is required to amend the Implementation Plan based on progress and learned experiences.

You can view the full TMDL Implementation Plan by visiting our website at <https://oda.direct/TMDL>.

## What does the TMDL mean for my farm?

ODA will encourage landowners to implement voluntary practices to reduce *E. coli* pollution, and funding to support those practices on local farms will be prioritized. Farmers and ranchers are encouraged to connect with SWCDs and Watershed Councils to learn the best ways to protect their water from *E. coli* and explore the resources and funds available to support their farm.

Farms with stream or river access may receive requests to participate in water quality monitoring. Such monitoring is voluntary and will only be used to identify priority areas

and measure improvement over time.

Agricultural Water Quality rules will not be changing in conjunction with the TMDL Implementation Plan development. However, they may be reviewed if voluntary efforts are not sufficient to meet TMDL requirements. It is important that we all work together to tell ag's story, the efforts we are continually making to protect water quality and show progress in defining the issues and doing our part in improving water quality.



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