

Date: July 6, 2021

To: Environmental Quality Commission

From: Leah Feldon, Deputy Director

Subject: Item I: The State of Oregon's Environment (Informational)
July 22-23, 2021, EQC meeting

Why this is important DEQ collects and reports on a large range of environmental data. At this meeting, DEQ is providing a high-level overview of the status and trends for some key measures of Oregon's environment. As DEQ develops a new strategic plan, the agency intends to link key goals in the plan with measures that are reported to the commission and others on a regular basis.

Prior EQC involvement DEQ presented to the commission on the state of Oregon's environment at the September 2020 EQC meeting.

Background DEQ's mission is to be a leader in restoring, maintaining and enhancing the quality of Oregon's air, water and land. To carry out this mission, DEQ collects a large range of data on the status of and trends in Oregon's air, land and water quality.

There are three types of measures, using the variety of data collected, that DEQ uses to track Oregon's environmental health:

- State of Oregon Key Performance Measures
- Environmental Council of the States measures
- DEQ measures for outcome-based management

DEQ reports Key Performance Measures to the Oregon Legislature, which the Legislature uses to assess agency performance. DEQ uses some of these measures to track environmental outcomes annually or biennially.

The Environmental Council of the States, ECOS, is the national non-profit, non-partisan association of state and territorial environmental agency leaders. Oregon participates in the ECOS common measure project, which is an interactive web tool displaying measures that are tracked at the state level

across the nation. This project is intended to communicate public health, environmental progress, and economic impact over time.

DEQ tracks a set of agency measures for outcome-based management, and reports on them in quarterly performance review meetings open to all agency staff. Although most measures are reported quarterly, some, such as the environmental outcome measures, are reported on annually or less often.

Air and water data collected by DEQ laboratory staff is used in many ways across agency programs: to develop standards, update permit conditions, monitor levels of criteria air pollutants for which EPA has established health-based standards and track greenhouse gas emissions data that allow us to gage our progress towards Oregon's climate goals. Some types of data are reported out to EPA, ensuring national consistency when evaluating environmental health, and shared with local, state, federal and tribal entities working to improve Oregon's environment. In addition to the data from air and water sampling, DEQ uses land quality data to evaluate waste generation and recovery, including through the state's recycling system, track sites which have been cleaned up and are no longer contaminated by historic and current-use harmful chemicals and ensure that Oregon's lands are healthy for all.

DEQ also produces public information from agency data including the Air Quality Index, summary reports for watersheds across the state, a database of cleanup sites, and visual information for water quality storymaps and other online products.

During the last year, DEQ and the State of Oregon experienced two exceptional challenges for our operations and staff: the COVID pandemic and the extreme September 2020 wildfires. We see effects from these events reflected in this year's measures; however, especially for the wildfires, we likely will not realize the full effects immediately. Additional resources provided this year by the Legislature to monitor wildfire impacts into the future will increase our ability to quantify environmental changes that go beyond the immediate results seen in 2020.

Discussion questions

This presentation will show areas where public health and the environment are improving, and areas where there are concerns. As part of the presentation, DEQ requests feedback from the commission about the measures, in addition to general discussion on the results.

Specifically:

1. What opportunities do you see, currently or within the next several years, for DEQ's data collection and tracking to relate to the work of other government partners (local, state, federal, tribal), academic/research institutions or community-based organizations?
2. Overall, what types of information and data would help the agency track, analyze and communicate the health of Oregon's environment?

**EQC
involvement**

There is no EQC action associated with this agency information. DEQ will bring annual updates on this topic to the commission.

Report compiled by Stephanie Caldera
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