

Oregon Department of Environmental Quality

Working with Oregon Communities and Businesses to Protect Water, Air and Land and the Health of Oregonians

The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) is responsible for protecting clean air and clean water, cleaning up toxic spills, and managing the proper disposal of hazardous and solid wastes.

We accomplish this by issuing and enforcing permits that specify the amount of pollution a facility can legally discharge into Oregon's rivers, groundwater, air or land. Over the past 30 years, local governments and industries have invested millions of dollars to improve pollution controls and clean up discharges.

We also work with communities to provide low cost loans and technical assistance to improve pollution controls. DEQ provides some grants for on-the-ground improvements to help water quality. DEQ works with businesses on incentive programs to help achieve clean air.

DEQ Carries Out Federal Environmental Laws in Oregon

Many environmental laws in Oregon are required by federal laws passed by Congress, including the Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, and Resource Conservation and Recovery Act. The federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) delegates authority to DEQ to operate these federal laws in Oregon. EPA has oversight authority over how DEQ carries out these federal laws. EPA also has separate enforcement authority under these federal laws.

DEQ Works Locally

Before 1993, most of DEQ's staff was located in Portland. We moved most of our staff into field offices so we can better understand problems facing Oregon communities and provide more local service. Today DEQ has 16 offices around the state including Bend, Coos Bay, Eugene, Grants Pass, Hermiston, Medford, North Coast, Pendleton, Salem, The Dalles, and Tillamook.

Solving Environmental Problems

In 1980, only 30% of Oregonians lived in clean air areas. Today, 100% of Oregonians live where the air meets national health standards. However, population growth presents constant challenges to maintaining this success. In

addition, new research into the health effects of pollutants like toxic air pollutants, low-level ozone (smog) and fine particles have led to stricter federal regulations designed to protect public health. DEQ is working with local communities to keep pace and ensure Oregon's air continues to meet national health standards.

In Oregon, 64 percent of rivers monitored by DEQ are improving in water quality and 1 percent are declining in water quality. However, more than 14,000 miles of Oregon's rivers fail to meet clean water standards. Population growth will make it a challenge to keep our rivers clean.

DEQ is a partner in the Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds and the Economic Revitalization Team, recognizing that Oregonians must work together to understand and solve environmental and economic problems.

DEQ accomplishments

- More than 26,000 leaks from underground storage tanks have been cleaned up.
- 91 old, unlined and unprotected landfills have been closed.
- 3.6 million pounds of household hazardous waste have been collected over the past 12 years – approximately 280,000 pounds every year.
- More than 500 toxic sites have been cleaned up; many have been returned to productive use or are suitable for redevelopment. DEQ has helped in the site certification of 31 properties which received the state's Industrial Land Certification, meaning that they are now ready for development.
- EPA has approved clean water plans (technically known as Total Maximum Daily Loads or TMDLs) for 449 river and stream segments. DEQ has been recognized by EPA nationally for the quality of its TMDL program.
- Deadly chemical weapons are being safely destroyed at the Umatilla Chemical Agent Disposal Facility in accordance with international treaty requirements.
- Oregon is moving toward cleaner cars with new tailpipe emission standards for motor vehicles, beginning with model year 2009.



State of Oregon
Department of
Environmental
Quality

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DEQ's mission is to be an active leader in restoring, maintaining, and enhancing the quality of Oregon's air, water and land.

This move will reduce greenhouse gases from new vehicles sold in Oregon by 30% by 2015.

- The roughly 200 enforcement actions DEQ takes each year not only help protect and clean up the environment but return at least \$1 million to the state General Fund every two years.

DEQ's Priorities

Protecting the environment requires excellence in science and technical work - but working with people is just as important as the law, the rules and science. DEQ strives to deliver excellent customer service in all our work.

Clean water is important to Oregon's economy, people's health and recreation, and fish and wildlife. It is a priority for DEQ to protect Oregon's water.

We know more about toxic chemicals today than we did years ago. We know that some chemicals accumulate in the environment, posing public health risks. It is a priority for DEQ to protect people's health from toxic chemicals.

Oregonians' daily activities, such as driving our cars and fertilizing our lawns, constitute more than 80 percent of pollution to air, land and water. It is a priority for DEQ to involve more Oregonians in solving environmental problems.

How is DEQ Funded?

DEQ's day to day operations are funded:

- About 66 percent from fees and cost recovery
- About 21 percent from federal funds (grants from the Environmental Protection Agency)
- About 13 percent from State General Funds and Lottery Funds

Natural resource agencies as a group receive about 1 percent of the State's General Fund.

Alternative formats

Alternative formats (Braille, large type) of this document can be made available. Contact DEQ's Office of Communications & Outreach, Portland, at (503) 229-5696, or toll-free in Oregon at 1-800-452-4011, ext. 5696.