

Reissued 700-PM General Permit for Small-Scale, In-Water Mining

DEQ's role

The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality is responsible for protecting and enhancing Oregon's water and air quality, for cleaning up spills and releases of hazardous materials, and for managing the proper disposal of hazardous and solid wastes. One way DEQ does this is by requiring permits for certain activities. DEQ issues permits to regulate wastewater discharge from small-scale placer mining operations used to recover precious metals and minerals from streambed sediments.

Who is affected by this permit?

This 700-PM National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System general permit is a statewide permit for current and future placer mining activities covered by the permit. About 2,000 suction dredge operators are currently registered under the permit.

How does placer mining affect water quality?

Placer mining can increase turbidity (reduce water clarity) in streams. Suction dredging and sluicing in streams that are already noted for water quality problems for toxics can disturb stream-bottom sediments and lead to the release of toxic pollutants into the water column.

Why is DEQ reissuing this permit?

DEQ is reissuing this permit because the previous permit expired on June 30, 2010. The expired permit was administratively extended for any person who submitted a permit application and paid the annual fee prior to June 30, 2010. With this reissuance, DEQ addresses a pending Oregon Court of Appeals ruling that DEQ had not adequately articulated the basis for prior permit conditions and requirements.

What are the major changes in the reissued permit?

1. New permit applies both to suction dredges and to non-motorized mining equipment. Miners who use non-motorized equipment will be required to meet the performance standards of the permit but are not required to register or pay the \$25 annual fee. Prior permit did not apply to these activities.
2. New permit is clear that a permit is not required for hand panning.

3. New permit contains a 300-foot turbidity limit for ALL activities covered by the permit. Prior permit only contained a 300-foot limit for suction hoses four inches and greater. The 300-foot limit is based on review of scientific studies that indicate the turbidity plume from these activities is generally dispersed at this distance.
4. Where more than one piece of mining equipment operates in the same location, new permit requires that the turbidity plumes not overlap. Prior permit allowed two or more dredges with a smaller-than-four-inch intake nozzle to operate side by side.
5. New permit protects drinking water intakes and contains permit condition that there must be no visible turbidity from these activities at the point of a drinking water intake. Prior permit did not contain this condition.
6. New permit requires miners who operate suction dredges to keep records on the dates and locations of their activity as well as whether mitigating measures were needed to ensure that the 300-foot turbidity limit was not exceeded. Prior permit did not require monitoring or record keeping for dredges with hoses smaller than four inches.
7. New permit aligns nozzle and horsepower restrictions with restrictions adopted by the Oregon Department of State Lands for protecting essential salmon habitat. Prior permit did not create this consistency.
8. A new limit that mining must not cause any measurable increase in turbidity in 12 of the 47 wilderness areas in Oregon created before 1972.

How can I apply?

The application can be found on DEQ's website: <http://www.deq.state.or.us/wq/wqpermit/mining.htm#700pm>.

Existing permit holder who submitted the 2010 annual fees in accordance with the 2005 permit are covered under this permit on July 30, 2010. These permit holders must complete and submit the 2010 application form within 30 days (August 30) to



State of Oregon
Department of
Environmental
Quality

Water Quality Division Surface Water Management

811 SW Sixth Avenue
Portland, OR 97204-1390
Phone: (503) 229-6402
(800) 452-4011
Fax: (503) 229-6037
Contact: Beth Moore
E-mail:
moore.beth@deq.state.or.us

www.oregon.gov/DEQ

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Please include your full name, e-mail address and mailing address so that we can purge you from our print mailing list, thus saving trees and taxpayer dollars.

retain coverage.

Eugene, OR 97401

DEQ will also mail applications to all who ever were covered by the prior permit regardless of whether they paid the 2010 annual fee.

How much does the permit cost?

The annual fee for this permit is \$25. Permit holders may pay a pro rated fee in advance for \$90.

What legal requirements apply?

Oregon Revised Statutes (ORS) 468B and Oregon Administrative Rules (OAR) Chapter 340 Division 045-0033 give DEQ the authority to issue general permits.

How did DEQ determine what requirements go in the permit?

Various federal and state regulations apply depending on the type of activity, the type and amount of wastewater discharged and the location of the facility and receiving water. This permit includes appropriate monitoring and recordkeeping requirements to ensure compliance with these rules.

Turbidity is the pollutant of concern. Effluent limits and best management practices are included in this permit to protect water quality and beneficial uses of water such as swimming, fishing and drinking water.

What are known health effects or environmental impacts of turbidity?

Turbidity is a measure of the cloudiness of water. Excessive turbidity can pose a threat to the survival of fish and other aquatic life by affecting their ability to see, feed and spawn. It can also clog gills. By reducing light penetration, high turbidity levels can disrupt the life cycle for some organisms, particularly bottom-dwelling organisms. For humans, high turbidity levels can interfere with the disinfection of drinking water. Turbidity can also affect recreational uses of water.

Where can I get more information?

Jim Billings, compliance specialist, Portland, (503) 229-5073 or toll-free in Oregon at (800) 452-4011, ext. 5073
billings.jim@deq.state.or.us

Paper copies of the permit and fact sheet are also available at the nearest DEQ office.

Pendleton Office
700 SE Emigrant, #330
Pendleton, OR 97801

Eugene Office
165 E. Seventh
Ave., Suite 100

Salem Office Portland Office
750 Front St. NE, Suite 120 811 SW Sixth Ave.,
Salem, OR 97301-1039 Portland, OR 97204

Related mining authorities

For more information about other state and federal requirements pertaining to the location, reclamation and operation of metal mining activities contact:

- Oregon Parks & Recreation Department: See <http://www.oregon.gov/OPRD/RULES/waterways.shtml> or call (503) 986-0733, Salem.
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers: See <http://www.nwp.usace.army.mil/op/g/home.asp> or call (503) 808-4373, Portland.
- Oregon Department of State Lands: See <http://www.oregonstatelands.us/DSL/PERMITS/index.shtml>, or call (503) 986-5200, Salem.
- Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife: See *Oregon Guidelines for Timing of In-Water Work to Protect Fish and Wildlife Resources* at <http://www.dfw.state.or.us/lands/inwater/> or call (503) 947-6200, Salem.
- Oregon Water Resources Department: See <http://www.wrd.state.or.us/OWRD/offices.shtml>, or call (503) 986-0900, Salem.
- Oregon Department of Geology and Minerals Industries: Call (541) 967-2039, Albany, or see <http://www.oregon.gov/DOGAMI/mlr/newmlrpermitting.shtml>.
- U.S. Forest Service (Region 6): Call the district ranger for the national forest where you want to mine or see <http://www.fs.fed.us/geology/>.
- U.S. Bureau of Land Management: See <http://www.blm.gov/or/pubroom/miningadmin.php> or call (503) 808-6008, Portland.

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 call toll-free in Oregon at 1-800-452-4011, ext. 5696.

