

Public Notice: Hearings and Request for Comments

Proposed Pollution Limits and Water Quality Plan for the John Day River Basin

Comments due: 5 p.m., Monday, Aug. 9, 2010

Proposal: DEQ is seeking comments on a draft water quality plan for the John Day Basin. The plan includes pollution limits and other goals to protect and improve water quality. The purpose of the plan is to ensure that streams are safe for fishing and swimming, and healthy for fish and wildlife.

Hearings: DEQ will hold information sessions and hearings to answer questions and accept comments:

Wednesday, July 21

5 p.m. information session; 6 p.m. public hearing

Family Services
401 Fourth Street
Fossil, OR 97830

Wednesday, July 28

5 p.m. information session; 6 p.m. public hearing

The Outpost Pizza, Pub, & Grill
201 W Main Street
John Day, OR 97845

Background: DEQ has identified several water quality concerns in the basin, including high temperature and bacteria levels, low oxygen concentration and impaired biological conditions.

DEQ has listed impaired waters throughout Oregon, including streams of the John Day Basin. The Federal Clean Water Act requires DEQ to develop pollution control targets and improvement plans for impaired waters. The draft targets are known as Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs), established for each pollutant in a waterbody.

A TMDL assessment uses scientific data collection and analysis to determine the amount and source of each pollutant entering the river system. A TMDL is the maximum amount of pollutant that can be present in a waterbody while meeting water quality standards. Maximum allowable pollutant loads are assigned to contributing sources, typically based on land use jurisdictions. This limits each source to levels that will meet clean water standards.

Water temperature is the most widespread concern in the basin. The causes of stream heating are excess solar radiation, decreased groundwater interaction and instream flow reduction. These conditions result from human-related stream modifications such as vegetation disturbance, irrigation withdrawal and channel straightening. In support of temperature reduction, the draft plan calls for increased stream shade and a more natural channel shape. DEQ encourages water conservation and flow restoration as well.



State of Oregon
Department of
Environmental
Quality

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By: Don Butcher

DEQ has most frequently measured elevated bacteria concentrations in the upper mainstem, above the South Fork confluence. The most likely bacteria sources are livestock, urban runoff, rural residential, recreational areas and wildlife. The draft TMDL sets limits throughout the basin, and calls for phased reductions of 69 and 83 percent, with prioritization on the upper mainstem.

The temperature TMDL implementation will address both low oxygen levels and impaired biologic conditions.

The widespread pollution from runoff and solar heating is commonly referred to as 'nonpoint' source pollution. Nonpoint source pollution is by far the largest cause of water quality degradation in the basin. Though slight in comparison, wastewater discharges from facilities (point sources) have potential to decrease water quality as well. Temperature and bacteria limits are included in the TMDL for, four municipal sewage treatment plants and three animal feedlots.

TMDL implementation is carried out through two primary mechanisms: water quality permits for point sources of pollution and water quality management plans for nonpoint sources. The municipal water quality permits are administered by DEQ. The confined animal feeding operations permits are jointly issued by DEQ and the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) and administered by ODA.

The TMDL document includes a Water Quality Management Plan with strategies and approaches for implementing the TMDLs. The plan designates organizations to prepare and carry out sector or source specific TMDL implementation plans.

The organizations designated to prepare and carry out TMDL implementation plans include the US Forest Service, US Bureau of Land Management, Oregon Departments of Agriculture and Forestry, Counties, Cities and others. The timeline for submittal of these plans is generally 18 months, following issuance of a TMDL.

How to comment: Send comments to Don Butcher, DEQ Eastern Region Office, 700 SE Emigrant Ave., Suite 330, Pendleton, OR 97801, by e-mail to butcher.don@deq.state.or.us, or fax to 541-278-0168.

How to review documents: Copies of draft document are available upon request by contacting Don Butcher in Pendleton at 541-278-4603. Fact sheets regarding the water quality plans are also available. DEQ encourages individuals with computer capabilities to view the documents directly on the DEQ Web page at <http://www.deq.state.or.us/WQ/TMDLs/johnday.htm>

Draft documents and related materials are also available for review at:

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700 SE Emigrant Ave., Suite 330
Pendleton, OR 97801
Contact: Don Butcher 541-278-4603



DEQ Headquarters
811 SW Sixth Avenue
Portland, OR 97204
Contact: Stephanie Brandon
503- 229-5013

Gilliam County Library
310 S. Main
Condon, OR 97823
541-384-6052

Grant County Library
507 S. Canyon Blvd.
John Day, OR 97845
541-575-1992

North Fork John Day Watershed Council
610 N. Highway 395
Long Creek, OR 97856
541-421-3018

Accessibility information: DEQ is committed to accommodating people with disabilities. Please notify DEQ of any special physical or language accommodations or if you need information in large print, Braille or another format. To make these arrangements, contact DEQ Communications & Outreach (503) 229-5696 or toll free in Oregon at (800) 452-4011; fax to 503-229-6762; or e-mail to deqinfo@deq.state.or.us.

People with hearing impairments may call DEQ's TTY number, (local office TTY).

