



PUBLIC NOTICE

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Virtual Public Hearing and Request for Comment About Proposed 700-PM Water Quality General Permit Renewal

HOW TO PROVIDE PUBLIC COMMENT

Permit type: Water quality general permit for in-stream placer mining

Hearing details: Jan. 22, 2025, 1:30 p.m.,
[Register for virtual public hearing on Zoom:](#)

Send written comments to:

By mail: Beth Moore, Oregon DEQ
700 NE Multnomah Street, Suite 600, Portland, OR 97232

By email: 700PM@deq.oregon.gov

Comments due by: Jan. 27, 2025, at 5 p.m.

The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality invites the public to provide written comments and attend a public hearing to provide verbal comments on the conditions of the 700-PM proposed water quality general permit for in-stream placer mining, known officially as a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit.

Summary

Subject to public review and comment, DEQ intends to renew the proposed water quality permit, which allows but limits discharge of wastewater from suction dredges and in-water, non-motorized mining equipment.

About the general permit

The proposed permit regulates wastewater discharge from placer mining. Suction dredges and in-water, non-motorized equipment are used in placer mining to recover precious metals and minerals from stream deposits. DEQ last renewed this permit on May 6, 2020.

This general permit limits discharges by equipment type and size in waters designated as essential salmon habitat. This permit allows discharges in essential salmon habitat from the operation of non-motorized mining equipment and non-motorized (gravity/siphon) suction dredges that have a suction hose no larger than four inches. Permit coverage is not available for motorized suction dredges in essential salmon habitat.

Outside essential salmon habitat, this permit allows discharges from motorized suction dredges not exceeding 30 horsepower with a suction hose no larger than four inches, gravity/siphon suction dredges equipped with a suction hose no larger than six inches and non-motorized mining equipment.

The proposed permit is not for all areas or water bodies of the state. There are restrictions on permit coverage in the following designated waters:

Translation or other formats

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- State-designated scenic waterways
- Essential Salmon Habitat
- Outstanding Resource Water
- Tribal lands or water that constitutes a boundary with Tribal lands
- Water bodies listed as water quality limited categories 4 and 5 on DEQ's impaired waters 303(d) list for sediment, turbidity and toxics unless a total maximum daily load (pollution reduction plan) is provided
- Streams as described in the Willamette Basin Mercury TMDL

What types of pollutants does the permit regulate?

This permit sets conditions for the following pollutants: turbidity, suspended sediment that can cause turbidity, and toxics. Turbidity is a measure of muddiness or cloudiness in water. The discharge of sediment can cause a turbid plume in the water.

Disturbance of streambed sediments in streams listed as water quality impaired for toxics can lead to the release of toxic pollutants in the water. This permit limits activities that can cause turbidity, release toxics and pose a threat to aquatic habitat and drinking water. The permit, which proposes discharge limits and outlines best management practices, helps ensure that in-stream pollutants are not increased.

Would the draft permit change the amount of pollution the operation is allowed to release?

No.

How did DEQ determine permit requirements?

DEQ evaluates types and amounts of pollutants and the water quality of the surface water or groundwater where the pollutants are proposed to be discharged and determines permit requirements to ensure the proposed discharges will meet applicable statutes, rules, regulations and effluent guidelines of Oregon and the Clean Water Act.

DEQ reviewed permits, literature and equipment manufacturer information. Material references are provided in the permit fact sheet.

How does DEQ monitor compliance with the permit requirements?

This permit will require dredge operators to conduct daily visual monitoring for turbidity, check for invasive species and report noncompliance in an annual report. To further ensure permit compliance, Oregon State Police patrol and respond to complaints. DEQ conducts permit compliance inspections with OSP. DEQ provides permit compliance training and outreach to other agencies.

What happens next?

Submit comments by sending an email or using mail service addressed to the permit coordinator listed in the "how to provide public comment" box above.

DEQ will consider and respond to all comments received and may modify the proposed permit based on comments. DEQ gives equal weight to written and verbal comments.

For more information

Find more information by reviewing draft permit documents on [DEQ's Metal Mining Activities web page](#), or contact Beth Moore at 503-229-6402, Jim Billings 503-229-5073 or 700PM@deq.oregon.gov with questions or to view documents in person at a DEQ office.

Non-discrimination statement

DEQ does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, disability, age or sex in administration of its programs or activities. Visit DEQ's [Civil Rights and Environmental Justice page](#).