

Fact Sheet

Water Quality Assessment: DEQ's Integrated Report

The federal Clean Water Act requires the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality to report on the quality of Oregon's surface waters every two years. Surface waters are any body of water above ground, including streams, rivers, lakes, wetlands, reservoirs, creeks and the ocean. This effort represents the state's most comprehensive evaluation of water quality data and information to determine whether Oregon's waters are fully supporting beneficial uses, such as fish and aquatic life, drinking water or water contact recreation.

For each reporting cycle, DEQ uses the applicable assessment methodology to document how DEQ will determine when a water body is or isn't impaired for pollution. Read more about DEQ's [assessment methodology](#). All readily available data is assembled through an open "Call for Data" and pulling data from publicly available databases into DEQ's water quality data portal, called [AWQMS](#). The result of these analyses and conclusions is called the "Integrated Report" because it combines the requirements of Clean Water Act section 305(b) to develop a water quality status report and the section 303(d) requirement to develop a list of impaired waters.

Reporting

Oregon uses four distinct categories to classify the status of a body of water for the Integrated Report. Category 2 means data available for that body of water only shows that it is meeting water quality standards. Category 3 means there is insufficient data to determine whether the water is meeting water quality standards or not.

Once data show a waterbody is impaired for a pollutant, DEQ lists it as Category 5 – impaired. This means it goes on DEQ's list of impaired water bodies, sometimes called "the 303(d) list." DEQ also determines the priority level for developing a Total Maximum Daily Load, or TMDL, for that water body. TMDLs are a tool for state environmental agencies to cap the amount of pollution that goes into water and, once developed, are

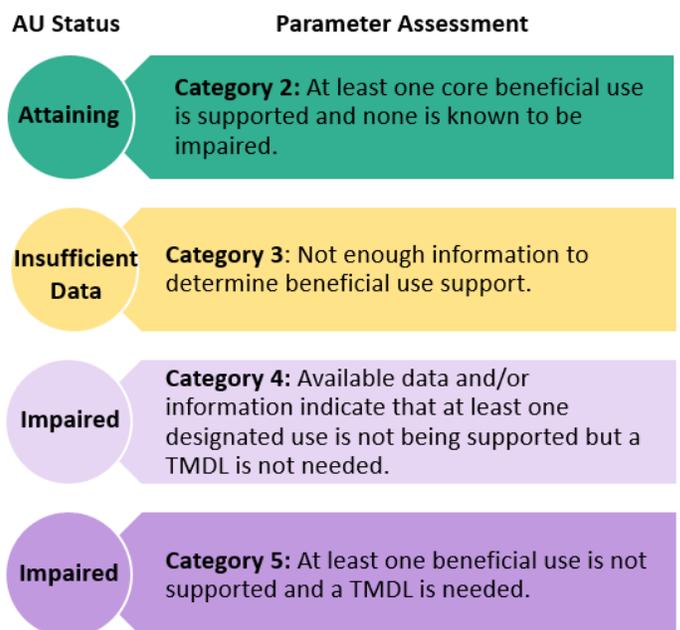


Figure 1. Categories used to report on waterbody status.

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typically how waterbodies are removed from the 303(d) list. Waterbodies move from Category 5 to Category 4 once DEQ does one of the following:

- Develops a TMDL for an impaired waterbody that U.S. Environmental Protection Agency approves,
- Demonstrates the impairment cannot be addressed by a TMDL, or
- Demonstrates it is addressing the impairment using a pollution control plan other than a TMDL.

Waterbodies are often broken into smaller pieces called assessment units, for example a small stretch of a larger river, and DEQ may evaluate it for over 150 unique pollutants depending on data availability. If any assessed pollutant is determined to be impaired the entire assessment unit is considered impaired.

How to read the Integrated Report

[Integrated Report results](#) are available to the public in multiple ways depending on your preference.

- [Access the interactive story map.](#)
- [Explore an interactive web map application for assessment unit level reporting.](#)
- [Explore pollutant level results and download raw data.](#)

Public process and participation

DEQ conducts this assessment every two years and provides a number of opportunities for the public to learn about and get involved in Integrated Report development. There are opportunities to provide data, attend technical work group sessions, attend webinars and comment on DEQ's proposed assessment methodology. DEQ provides an informational overview of the draft assessment methodologies before the Environmental Quality Commission, DEQ's governing body, and an opportunity for public comment before finalizing the methodology.

DEQ encourages the public and volunteer groups; watershed councils; environmental organizations; academia; local, state, and federal governments; tribal governments; and other non-profit organizations to submit data to be incorporated into the water quality assessments.

Finally, before DEQ submits the Integrated Report to EPA, a draft is posted for public comment. DEQ holds informational webinars to highlight major findings and how to use the new data tools created for each cycle. Submission to EPA includes a formal response to public comments and detailed log of public participation for each reporting cycle. [Sign up for email updates about water quality assessment.](#)

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Non-discrimination statement

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