



Oregon Needs Additional Capacity to Screen for Toxics In Our Rivers

Toxics Sampling - Today we know that toxic substances are found in our air, our water, and in the ground. The sources vary greatly. Recently new attention has been brought to the issue of air toxics, and the Oregon DEQ has responded to the challenge. Drinking water is an issue as well. In these areas, the level of testing has been insufficient for years. The same is true of Oregon's rivers.

Across the State of Oregon, the myriad and diverse rivers in our midst are subject to relatively little testing for toxic contaminants on a regular basis by the State of Oregon. Too little is known about potentially harmful substances that could have a negative impact on human health and that of wildlife, from both legacy and newly introduced products. Of the hundreds of chemical compounds that are known to have been introduced, and have been seen in past screenings, there is virtually no information that is gathered on a regular basis to signal increases or decreases of these substances in our rivers.

For example, in the Willamette River system, the last sampling of river sediments, fish tissue, and water was conducted by the Oregon DEQ in 2008-10, with the evaluation of that information published in 2012. That was repeated this past summer, 7-9 years after the last round. A more meaningful timeframe would be 2-3 years.

Limitations - At present, the Oregon DEQ lab does not have the capacity to sample and analyze more frequently. They lack the equipment, but more importantly they lack the lab personnel to collect samples, prepare them for analysis, and to analyze them for toxic compounds.

Action - In Oregon, as the budget for 2017/18 is developed, we have a very real opportunity to make a difference in the coming months in relation to improving our understanding of toxics in our rivers. We should not only protect the capacity of DEQ at present, but we should add to it. It is simply deficient. The Oregon DEQ needs an addition 9 FTE's and \$600k for additional equipment in order to double its toxics sampling and testing capacity.

Let's take this important opportunity to increase our understanding, and protect public health and wildlife across the State by providing the agency with sufficient resources to accomplish this critical task.

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