



Oregon  
Environmental  
Council  
It's Your Oregon

222 NW Davis Street  
Suite 309  
Portland, OR 97209-3900  
503.222.1963  
www.oeconline.org

## Testimony to the Joint Ways & Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources on House Bill 5017

February 21, 2019

**Morgan Gratz-Weiser, Legislative Director  
Oregon Environmental Council**

Founded in 1968, the Oregon Environmental Council (OEC) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, membership-based organization. We advance innovative, collaborative and equitable solutions to Oregon's environmental challenges for today and future generations.

Oregon Environmental Council supports robust funding for the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). DEQ provides critical services to Oregon's residents and businesses by implementing programs that ensure our water is safe drink, our air is clean to breathe, and that Oregon's natural resources—essential for a strong economy and quality of life—are protected.

### **AIR QUALITY**

The state must remain vigilant to meet federal standards for particulate matter and ozone standards, and hazardous air pollutant are a serious concern all across Oregon, especially diesel pollution and wood smoke pollution. Additional resources and efforts are needed to reduce air pollution and the myriad of health impacts caused by poor air quality. To that end, OEC supports the following policy packages that will improve Oregon's air quality:

- **#111: Ensure Electric Vehicle Rebate Program Oversight.** This will transition a limited duration position to a permanent position so that the rebates are well utilized, especially by low and moderate income Oregonians, and help the state meet its goal of 50,000 electric vehicles by 2020.
- **#116: Eliminate Air Quality Permit Backlog.** A fee increase to fund new positions is needed to deal with long-expired permits and to ensure that permits are renewed on time moving forward. Timely permitting is necessary to create regulatory certainty for businesses and to ensure companies are not emitting excess pollution.
- **#118: Maintain Effective Vehicle Inspection Service.** Increasing Vehicle Inspection Program fees by a small amount will allow DEQ maintain a strong vehicle inspection program for cars and light trucks in Portland and Medford area, keeping those areas in attainment of the federal Clean Air Act. If this program does not operate effectively, industry may need to shoulder a greater burden.
- **#119: Implement Air Toxics Permitting Program.** New air quality permit fees will allow 11 temporary positions to become permanent thus enabling effective implementation of new air toxics permitting rules (aka Cleaner Air Oregon).

We are concerned that POP#114 was eliminated in the Governor's Budget. This request of \$500,000 would support local communities that violate, or at risk of violating federal air quality standards, in implementing effective **wood smoke reduction** programs.

## **WATER QUALITY**

DEQ plays an essential role in the management and implementation of programs that protect water quality, provide support and information to agencies and others responsible for drinking water, wastewater and stormwater services. All of this is in service to the protection of human health, wildlife and the environment. We strongly support funding the following Policy Options Packages to enable DEQ to fulfill that role.

- **#125: Management of the Clean Water State Revolving Fund.** Loan servicing and management of DEQ's CWSRF loan portfolio, an important source of federal funding for local water pollution control projects, including innovative wastewater and stormwater control, and irrigation district modernizations.
- **#126: Klamath Basin Water Quality Improvements.** Support for a multi-agency effort to improve water quality and aquatic habitat in the Klamath Basin. Improving water quality is critical to the restoration of native fish species, including salmonids and two species of resident suckers that will return to the basin after dam removals in 2021.
- **#127: Water Quality Permitting.** Helps eliminate ongoing backlog of wastewater permits, and should also focus on integrating the water quality, TMDL and permitting programs with a focus on creating compliance strategies and pathways that will achieve real environmental benefits, such as restoration and watershed enhancement projects.
- **#161: Inventory Water Infrastructure Needs.** Comprehensive inventory of water infrastructure needs in partnership with Water Resources Department and Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board. Essential to a complete assessment of Oregon's water infrastructure needs.
- **#163: Managing Clean Water State Revolving Fund.** Upgrade CWSRF loan management software.

Although we consider them essential, the following POPs were not included in the Governor's Recommended Budget. We urge you to consider funding these POPs at the levels requested by the agency.

- **#122: Setting and Implementing Water Quality Standards.** Water quality standards are the foundation of Oregon's water quality program. This combination of general fund and fee increases will provide capacity for timely development and implementation of water quality standards, including variances and other strategies for implement standards in permits, water quality assessments and TMDLs.
- **#123: Harmful Algae Bloom (HAB) Response and Assessment.** This package will create a small team to monitor and analyze HAB samples and work with external partners to plan and implement activities that will reduce the occurrence and severity of HABs in the future.
- **#124: Integrated Water Resources Strategy.** This package will allow DEQ to continue providing its current level of water quality technical assistance for water storage and supply projects and place-based planning efforts. This level of technical assistance is essential for meeting Oregon's future water needs.
- **#128: Improving Water Quality Outcomes.** Builds capacity to produce information used for prioritizing and guiding watershed restoration efforts to ensure that investments made in water quality will maximize environmental

benefits. Essential to a complete assessment of Oregon's natural water infrastructure needs.

- **#129: Developing and Implementing Clean Water Plans.** Increases DEQ's capacity to develop and issue clean water plans, and enable DEQ to establish monitoring stations that provide real-time water quality data to the public and decision-makers.
- **#164: Laboratory Equipment and Asset Management Plan.** Provides funding to replace and/or maintain the many critical analytic tools DEQ uses to provide state agencies and others with data and information essential for understanding and managing Oregon's environment. Essential to a complete assessment of Oregon's natural water infrastructure needs.

## **LAND QUALITY**

Oregon must safely manage and reduce hazardous waste and toxic pollution by dealing with legacy pollution (such as leaking heating oil tanks and brownfields), managing materials and hazardous waste, and being prepared for emergencies. Of particular interest to OEC in the proposed budget is:

- **#133: Safe Transport of Hazardous Materials by Rail.** This will fund two positions from fees on the rail industry to conduct oil and hazardous material planning and preparedness along high hazard rail corridors.

## **AGENCY MANAGEMENT**

The Environmental Justice Task Force and the citizen advocate positions called for under ORS 182.545 must be fully funded to ensure greater public participation from minority and lower-income communities and to ensure that the agency's actions are fully reviewed for their impact on underserved communities. To that end, OEC supports:

- **#144: Environmental Justice Coordinator.** DEQ currently has a 0.02 FTE Environmental Justice Coordinator. This POP would fund a full-time position with expertise in this arena to ensure the agency complies with Title VI and statutory responsibility to the state's Environmental Justice Task Force.

In addition, in order to achieve increased public transparency, cross-agency collaboration, and efficiency in responding to public requests for information, OEC supports:

- **#140: Environmental data management system.** This POP will support development of an environmental data management system that will standardize and streamline agency practices and provide interactive service to the general public and specific stakeholders.

Ensuring a clean and healthy environment is a top priority for Oregonians. Thank you for your consideration.