

HB 3093 -8 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

House Committee On Water

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Meeting Dates: 3/11, 3/25

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Directs Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) to study harmful algal blooms (HABs) and make recommendations to an interim legislative committee by September 15, 2022. Sunsets on January 2, 2023. Takes effect on 91st day after the 2021 regular session adjourns sine die.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Need for improving interagency communication
- Harmful algal blooms (HABs) work group process and report
- Long-term recommendations for coordinating response to HABs

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

-8 Replaces measure. Directs Oregon Health Authority (OHA), in coordination with Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), to develop and implement strategies for monitoring and responding to harmful algal blooms (HABs) in freshwater environments, including strategies for maintaining communication between water management or water quality agencies; identify roles and responsibilities of state and local agencies related to freshwater HABs; develop enhanced protocols for issuing public health advisories of freshwater HABs; develop a publicly available web-based portal related to freshwater HABs; support specified studies; implement a monitoring program that prioritizes water bodies used for drinking water, public recreation, or agriculture; and support education and outreach on HABs. Directs OHA, in consultation with DEQ, to establish and appoint a technical advisory committee to meet at least once a year. Directs OHA to create, fill, and utilize a position within the authority of HABs coordinator to coordinate the authority's HABs monitoring and response activities; appropriates \$260,189 to OHA for the biennium beginning July 1, 2021 for this purpose. Directs DEQ, in consultation with OHA, to conduct water data collection and analysis, and develop watershed management strategies to reduce the severity, frequency, or duration of freshwater HABs. Directs DEQ to create, fill, and utilize one position within the department to analyze water quality samples and satellite information to help develop watershed management strategies; appropriates \$232,645 to DEQ for this purpose. Takes effect on the 91st day after the adjournment of the 2021 regular session.

BACKGROUND:

Harmful algal blooms are caused by high concentrations of certain types of algae that produce toxic compounds known as cyanotoxins. These blooms can cause sickness and death in humans, pets, and livestock who come into contact with or drink the contaminated water. Blooms can also result in hypoxia, or low oxygen, in water bodies, which can kill fish and other wildlife.

Oregon is experiencing increasing numbers of harmful algal blooms, including blooms on the North Santiam River that impact drinking water quality for the City of Salem in 2018. In response to this, a work group, comprised of stakeholders whose work intersects with either drinking water quality or recreational water quality, began in 2019 to consider short-term and long-term strategies for addressing harmful algal blooms and related impacts to Oregonians.

House Bill 3093 would direct DEQ to study HABs and report findings to an interim legislative committee by September 15, 2022.