



Oregon
Environmental
Council
It's Your Oregon



OEC believes that all Oregonians should be free to swim, boat and fish in our rivers – and to eat what we catch – without being concerned about our health.

Clean & Healthy Rivers Program

Why We Care

Despite Oregon's green reputation, our rivers have some serious problems.

- Every major river in Oregon violates water quality standards.
- Resident fish in the Willamette and Columbia rivers are so contaminated with Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs) and mercury that it is not safe to eat them.
- Water in most Oregon rivers is already fully allocated for human uses in summer and fall, leaving little water in-stream for fish and recreation.

Today, most of the pollution in Oregon's rivers comes from urban and agricultural runoff. That means we all must be part of the solution.

Urban Runoff

When rain falls onto streets, parking lots, rooftops and lawns, it picks up pollutants such as oil and grease, sediment, pesticides and fertilizers, bacteria and heavy metals. When that runoff enters a stormdrain, it usually ends up in local streams along with all the pollutants it carries.

OEC's work to reduce urban runoff is guided by the recommendations of a statewide task force we convened in 2007, which produced the report "*Stormwater Solutions: Turning Oregon's Rain Back into a Resource.*" The two key steps to reducing the impacts of urban runoff are preventing pollution from

getting into stormwater in the first place and improving the way Oregon's cities and towns manage stormwater.

State Stormwater Policies

Every five years the Department of Environmental Quality updates municipal stormwater permits, and the permits for Oregon's largest cities are up for renewal in 2009 and 2010. OEC is providing DEQ with ideas about how the stormwater permit program could better protect Oregon's rivers. We are also advocating for state transportation policies that offset the water quality impacts of roads.

Low Impact Development

OEC helps Oregon towns and cities update their stormwater infrastructure to treat, infiltrate, and/or capture stormwater instead of letting it run into streams. Low-impact development (LID) is a term used to describe a suite of development practices that preserve existing natural site features and install engineered, small-scale facilities that use plants and soil to soak up stormwater, making developed areas function like natural systems. One example of an LID practice is a rain garden, which helps slow, capture, filter, and infiltrate stormwater that runs off of rooftops. While LID is becoming more common in Oregon's largest cities, many of Oregon's small and medium-sized communities have little experience with these practices and their development codes may hinder innovation.

OEC, in partnership with Oregon Sea Grant Watershed Extension and with funding from the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, is organizing a series of LID workshops for local government staff, developers and private consultants in communities with growing development pressure and water quality-impaired streams. We also provide rain garden trainings to homeowners and master gardeners.

In the first year, our efforts focus in the Rogue Valley and parts of the Willamette Valley. In the second year, we plan to expand the project to coastal communities and other parts of the state as funding allows.

Local advisory committees help shape the content of our workshops. Expert speakers address common questions about LID, such as its cost and benefits, how to maintain LID facilities, and how to update local codes to encourage water quality-friendly development practices. The workshops include a discussion about how to integrate LID into local communities, so professionals involved in all stages of the development process, from planning to construction, are invited to participate. Find out about upcoming workshops at www.oeconline.org/stormwater.

Pollution Prevention

OEC provides individuals and businesses with tools to help prevent pollution, such as our popular “50 Ways to Love Your River” booklet.

Our partnership with the EcoBiz certification program recognizes landscaping companies that demonstrate leadership in reducing pollution.

Water Conservation

Global warming is beginning to place further stress on Oregon’s limited water supplies, which is sparking interest in new water storage projects. OEC is working to make water conservation and efficiency a focal point of Oregon’s water supply policies. We believe it’s smarter, better for the environment, and more cost-effective to invest in conservation first.

Agricultural Runoff

OEC helps ranchers and farmers reduce agriculture’s impact on our rivers through our **Healthy Food and Farms** program. We’re working to make Oregon a leader in food production and farming that protects our health and our environment.

Toxics

There is growing evidence that chemicals we use every day, such as pharmaceuticals and personal care products, are ending up in our rivers. OEC participated in a Drug Take Back task force to develop a safe way to dispose of unwanted pharmaceuticals instead of flushing them down the toilet. In addition, our **Kids and Health** program helps keep toxic chemicals out of our rivers by reducing their use and replacing them with safer alternatives.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Teresa Huntsinger, Program Director
503-222-1963 x 112
teresah@oeconline.org
www.oeconline.org/our-work/rivers

