

Department of Environmental Quality Budget—SB 5518

March 13th, 2017

The Association of Oregon Counties has always had a positive working relationship with the Department of Environmental Quality. Over the past year we have worked closely with their intergovernmental team and their land, water, and air division staff members. We have found them to be responsive, respectful and always looking to solve problems. We also look forward to seeing the efforts of newly hired Director Richard Whitman, we believe he will provide leadership that is needed in an agency as complex as DEQ.

Counties and DEQ work together in a number of ways:

- DEQ oversees the onsite septic program and 24 counties implement the program.
- The materials management team works on Goals and Measures and provides technical and educational support, among other things, to counties.
- Counties are permit holders under the water quality program.
- Counties interact with DEQ with the air quality program, most notably this year with the Cleaner Air Oregon Efforts and the Clean Diesel work.

It is essential to counties that DEQ have adequate staff available to assist counties with getting permits in a timely manner and to provide us with technical assistance on how to best meet permit requirements. In particular, the water quality staff working on the MS4 Phase II permitting needs to have proper funding in order to complete its work in a timely manner. Additionally, the air quality staff need to have adequate funding for data collection, AOC believes it is essential to base policy on scientifically sound data.

Over the past two years DEQ has worked closely and effectively with counties on a number of issues:

- Materials Management—the Materials Management team worked very proactively with the counties to pass two important bills in the 2015 legislative session. When AOC raised concerns, they were highly responsive to our issues and managed to find workable solutions. Over the past two years they have hosted rulemaking that have involved input from multiple county stakeholders and have been accommodating when AOC raised concerns.
- Onsite Septic—DEQ partnered with several stakeholders in developing legislation that developed an onsite septic loan program to help low-income Oregonians in financing new or repaired septic systems during the 2015 legislative session. They are currently

working with stakeholders on making minor revisions and finding more funding for the program.

- Wastewater/MS4 Phase II permitting—DEQ has worked with multiple stakeholders on this very complex issue. While AOC has not always been pleased with the rate of progress in this work we have been satisfied with the level of inclusion and information regarding the work.
- Cleaner Air Oregon—AOC has a representative on the workgroup. When the Cleaner Air Oregon team sent out a letter on November 28, 2016 to 17 counties regarding potential emissions AOC was quite concerned: it seemed as some of the requests would be very difficult and expensive to comply with. DEQ responded to our concerns and is currently working on a compromise approach that still collects the data they need to ensure a healthy Oregon while respecting the budget constraints of local government.
- Clean Diesel—DEQ staff have consistently provided requested information and have facilitated outreach during the work with retrofits, repower, and replacement of aging diesel infrastructure.
- Clean Fuels—AOC has worked closely with Clean Fuels staff to develop a better understanding of the program and what are the potential benefits and costs to counties.

AOC believes that regulatory actions must be based on sound science and complete data. Oregon should not be developing policy and regulations without robust, reliable data. DEQ's funding should be such that they are able to make scientifically valid decisions. Please contact AOC staff Mark Nystrom (mnystrom@oregoncounties.org) regarding this testimony.