



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Oregon Agrees to Improve Water Pollution Permit Affecting Hundreds of Industrial Sites, Ending Lawsuit with Environmental Groups

Settlement aims for stricter limits on toxic pollution in stormwater to protect salmon

August 20, 2018 (Portland, OR)—Columbia Riverkeeper and the Northwest Environmental Defense Center (NEDC) reached a [legal settlement](#) with the State of Oregon over the state’s one-size-fits-all permit that regulates toxic stormwater pollution from over [800 industrial sites](#). The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) agreed to take important steps to reduce pollution from industrial facilities such as metal scrap yards, truck depots, and lumber yards.

“Today’s settlement is an important victory for people that eat locally caught fish and rely on Oregon rivers for drinking water and recreation,” stated Columbia Riverkeeper’s Executive Director, Brett VandenHeuvel. “With a new permit, the State of Oregon can keep thousands of pounds of toxic pollution out of our of rivers—a huge win for people who jump in the Columbia on a hot day or feed their kids fish.”

Under the settlement, DEQ agreed to:

- *Strengthen protections for rivers already overburdened with pollution.* DEQ will add special protections for waterbodies that are already too polluted to support salmon, drinking water, and recreation.
- *Increase corporate accountability by improving pollution reporting.* DEQ will now require companies to report the amount and type of stormwater pollution they discharge four times per year instead of once. With the change, DEQ and the public can act more swiftly to hold companies accountable and reduce pollution.
- *Investigate and enact stronger pollution limits, if technically feasible.* An expert committee will investigate whether numeric permit limits for certain toxic stormwater pollutants are feasible.

Every time it rains, stormwater runs across industrial sites, carrying cancer-causing pollutants and toxic heavy metals into our streams and rivers. According to the National Research Council, urban stormwater runoff is the leading cause of water pollution in the United States.

In August 2017, DEQ rejected Columbia Riverkeeper and NEDC’s calls for critical changes to Oregon’s stormwater pollution permit. The groups raised concerns about the permit’s weak pollution limits and infrequent pollution reporting requirements. Columbia Riverkeeper and

NEDC challenged DEQ's proposed permit in order to protect rivers, salmon, and public health throughout Oregon.

"This settlement puts Oregon back on course towards becoming a national leader in confronting stormwater pollution," said Jamie Saul, attorney with Lewis & Clark Law School's Earthrise Law Center. "Under this agreement, DEQ will use the best available science to develop enforceable, numeric limits for the toxic pollutants copper, lead, and zinc found in industrial stormwater."

The Earthrise Law Center and the Law Office of Karl G. Anuta, P.C. represented Columbia Riverkeeper and NEDC in the lawsuit.

Resources:

- [Consent Judgment](#) and [Settlement Agreement](#)
- [Circuit Court Complaint](#)
- [Riverkeeper and NEDC's first & second public comments on DEQ's draft permit](#)
- DEQ's Industrial Stormwater Permit [Website](#)

About the Clean Water Act:

The objective of the [Clean Water Act](#), enacted in 1972, "is to restore and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the Nation's waters." The Clean Water Act requires facilities that discharge wastewater into rivers or lakes to have permits limiting pollution. The Clean Water Act also empowers public interest groups, like Columbia Riverkeeper and NEDC, to enforce those permits and protect our collective right to clean, safe rivers.

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[Columbia Riverkeeper](#) works to protect and restore the water quality of the Columbia River and all life connected to it, from the headwaters to the Pacific Ocean.

[NEDC](#) is an independent non-profit organization working to protect the environment and natural resources of the Pacific Northwest.

[Earthrise Law Center](#) is the environmental legal clinic at Lewis & Clark Law School. Earthrise Law Center is a team of impassioned attorneys and staff working to achieve targeted environmental improvement while teaching the next generation of advocates to do the same.

[Karl G. Anuta](#) is an attorney in private practice with a long history of environmental advocacy on behalf of conservation groups and individuals.

Visuals:

- [Map Featuring Facilities in Oregon Covered by a 1200-Z Industrial Stormwater Permit](#)
- HTML code for map featuring Facilities in Oregon Covered by a 1200-Z Industrial Stormwater Permit `<iframe src="https://www.google.com/maps/d/embed?mid=1_-VUZH-ro_f31mOGc1uzl3DI3qM5T-SN" width="640" height="480"></iframe>`
- Methodology for map list: Total Facilities (with active permits): 832 (July 10,2018)
 - To find list: <https://www.deq.state.or.us/wq/sisdata/facilitylist.asp>
 - Under "Select the Permit Type" drop down menu select: Gen12Z, Stormwater, NPDES, Specific SIC codes.
 - Hit select and list pops up.