

Agricultural Water Quality Management Area Plan and Rules

Oregon's legislature passed the Agricultural Water Quality Management Act in 1993. It requires the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) to prevent and control water pollution from agricultural activities.

As a result, ODA worked with local advisory committees to develop Water Quality Management Area Plans and Rules throughout the state. Area Plans are reviewed and updated by ODA and the local advisory committee every two years. The original Umpqua Area Plan and Rules were approved by ODA in 2001.

» The Area Plan

The Area Plan guides local landowners and their conservation partners on how to prevent pollution. It includes information on agricultural water quality concerns and recommendations for addressing them.

The Area Plan does not tell anyone how to farm, ranch, or otherwise use natural resources. Rather, it includes recommended practices that a landowner can choose from. The practices can help meet their business and conservation goals, while also preventing water pollution.

Agricultural water quality concerns in the Umpqua area are primarily:

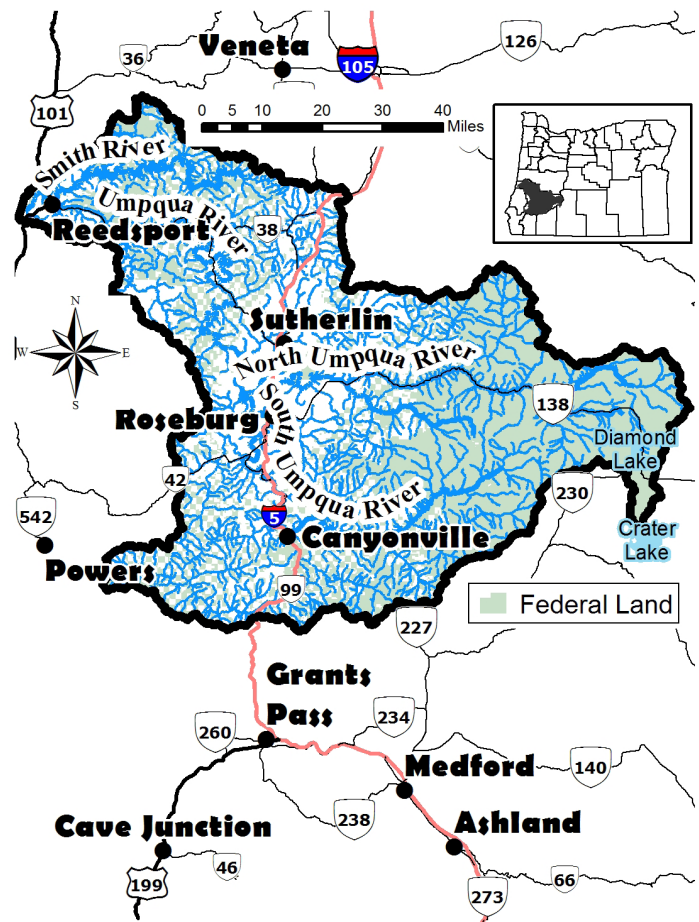
- Sediment
- Nutrients
- Bacteria
- Water temperature
- Waste management

» The Area Rules

The Agricultural Water Quality Program focuses on voluntary and cooperative efforts by landowners and others to protect water quality.

However, the Agricultural Water Quality Management Act also includes enforcement to ensure prevention and control of water pollution from agricultural sources.

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» The Area Rules

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Area Rules allow landowners flexibility in how they protect water quality. Area Rules describe conditions that landowners must achieve on agricultural lands, rather than practices they must implement.

All agricultural landowners must allow vegetation along:

- Year-round streams to provide shade, stabilize banks, and filter out pollutants from overland flows.
- Seasonal streams to stabilize banks and filter out pollutants from overland flows.

In addition, landowners must not pollute ground or surface water by discharging wastes* into waters of the state or placing any wastes in a location where they are likely to enter waters of the state.**

** Wastes include excess soil, manure, fertilizer, or other substances that can pollute water.*

*** Waters of the state include ponds, groundwater, canals, ditches, and rivers.*

The local advisory committee helped ODA develop Area Rules (Oregon Administrative Rules 603-95-0740) specifically for the Umpqua area. These Rules address water quality issues identified in the Area Plan.

The following is a summary of regulations that apply to the Umpqua area:

- Sedimentation in excess of water quality standards moving from agricultural lands into waters of the state is an unacceptable condition.
- Phosphorous in excess of water quality standards moving from agricultural lands into waters of the state is an unacceptable condition.

- Agricultural activities shall allow the development of riparian vegetation to control water pollution by providing erosion control, sediment and nutrient filtering, moderation of solar heating, and water infiltration into the soil profile.
- Irrigation practices that contribute to significant amounts of warmed surface water to a stream are considered an unacceptable condition.

» Do the Area Plan and Area Rules apply to me?

The Area Plan and Area Rules apply to all agricultural lands. This includes lands in current agricultural use and those lying idle or on which management has been deferred. They also apply to agricultural activities within incorporated city boundaries, urban growth boundaries, and non-federal forest lands.

» What should I do?

Landowners should evaluate their agricultural activities and try to determine if they might:

- Pollute streams, canals, or groundwater.
- Prevent growth of appropriate vegetation along streams.

Then change any problem practices to ensure compliance with the Area Rules and to protect water quality.

» Who can help?

The Douglas and Umpqua soil and water conservation districts (SWCDs) are the primary source of landowner assistance to address water quality concerns. SWCDs are non-regulatory local organizations that can help or direct landowners to additional sources of help.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

- » Douglas Soil and Water Conservation District: **541.900.0354** or **541.900.0689**, cindy@dswcd.org
- » Umpqua Soil and Water Conservation District: **541.662.1341**
- » Beth Pietrzak, ODA Water Quality Specialist: **541.414.8797**, elizabeth.pietrzak@oda.oregon.gov
- » ODA's Agricultural Water Quality Program: **503.986.4700**, <https://oda.direct/AgWQPlans>