

Monitoring

The ODA water quality program conducts a variety of monitoring and evaluation activities. These activities help ODA and our partners determine whether landowners' and agencies' conservation efforts on agricultural lands are effective in protecting and improving water quality, and meeting water quality standards.

The program primarily monitors agricultural land conditions, with a lesser focus on water quality monitoring. For example, we focus on tracking changes in streamside vegetation conditions, rather than conducting widespread stream temperature monitoring. Land condition monitoring is cost-effective, focuses on factors that landowners can control, demonstrates progress more quickly than water quality monitoring alone, and is justified by scientific literature.

The program collects land condition and water quality data, and also relies extensively on data collected by other agencies and organizations. For example, prior to biennial reviews of agricultural water quality plans and rules, the program evaluates data from ODA, the Department of Environmental Quality, and other local organizations such as Soil and Water Conservation Districts and Watershed Councils.

Land condition monitoring

ODA monitors land conditions by collecting and analyzing aerial photos of randomly selected streamside areas adjacent to agricultural lands. This helps us evaluate agricultural land conditions statewide and determine the effectiveness of Oregon agriculture in protecting streamside areas. Since 2004, the program has annually collected aerial photos of randomly selected stream segments in 3 to 7 agricultural water quality management areas. We photograph and evaluate conditions in each management area every 5 years. Reports for each year are below.

Priority areas

ODA is working with Soil and Water Conservation Districts to identify priority areas, conduct intensive land condition assessments, and offer voluntary technical and financial assistance to improve agricultural land conditions that affect water quality in these areas. By concentrating efforts in smaller geographic areas, ODA and our partners hope to show improvements in land conditions in a short period of time.

Water quality monitoring

ODA received funding from the 2011 legislature to support water quality monitoring at 19 agricultural sites in Oregon. These 19 sites will complement approximately 40 other agricultural sites currently monitored by the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality. We will analyze water quality data from the ODA and DEQ sites and track changes in water quality over time.