Mercury
TOTAL MAXIMUM DAILY LOAD

Here's what you need to know about Mercury in our local waterways

What is a Mercury Total Maximum Daily Load?

A Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) refers to identifying the source(s) of mercury in our waterways and determining how much mercury should be reduced to meet state and federal water quality standards. Businesses are familiar with the limits on "end-of-pipe" or "point source" discharges and work with the City Pretreatment Program, the TMDL Program covers pollutants that enter streams through runoff from driveways, streets, roofs, lawns, and fields. The ultimate goal of this process is to provide full restoration of the beneficial use of fish consumption, including the protection of aquatic species and wildlife throughout the Willamette Basin.

Why are we concerned about Mercury?

While cycling through the environment Mercury (Hg) can become Methylmercury (MeHg), an extremely toxic organic compound. Methylmercury readily binds to the cells of the body and travels up the food chain, having negative impacts on the health and wellbeing of critical wildlife species and humans. Methylmercury exposure in humans has been shown to have toxic effects on the nervous, digestive, and immune system, especially impacting the neurological development of children. Without mitigation, levels of Methylmercury in fish that live in and traverse the Willamette Basin could become too dangerous to eat, destroying a beloved pastime and a sector of the Oregon economy.

What is the City of McMinnville doing?

On November 15th, 2022, the Department of Environmental Quality approved of McMinnville's TMDL implementation plan. The focus of this plan will be to reduce soil erosion and stormwater runoff, two of the primary nonpoint sources of mercury pollution within the Yamhill Basin. From 2023-2027 the City will train city staff, and build on relationships with local stakeholders to explore ways that we can work together to protect and restore the ponds, creeks, and rivers within the City.

City of McMinnville
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