

# Arizona Department of Environmental Quality

## Our Mission and Vision

- To protect and enhance public health and the environment in Arizona.
- Through consistent, science-based environmental regulation; and clear, equitable engagement and communication;
- With integrity, respect, and the highest standards of effectiveness and efficiency;
- Because Arizonans treasure the unique environment of our state and its essential role in sustaining well-being and economic vitality, today and for future generations.

## What We Do

ADEQ stands for the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality. We administer the state's environmental laws and delegated federal programs to prevent air, water and land pollution and ensure cleanup.

The Arizona State Legislature created ADEQ in 1987 as the state's cabinet-level environmental agency.

### Air, Water, Waste



- ADEQ is composed of three environmental programs: Air Quality, Water Quality, and Waste, with functional units responsible for technical, operational and policy support.
- To ensure protection of public health and the environment, ADEQ helps oversee compliance with the following federal environmental laws: the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, and the Safe Drinking Water Act. ADEQ also implements 14 state-level Programs: Water Quality Assurance Revolving Fund (WQARF), Aquifer Protection, Surface Water Protection, Voluntary Remediation, Recycling, Brownfields, Drinking Water Monitoring Assistance, Voluntary Vehicle Repair, and Air Quality Flag.
- ADEQ's core functions include planning, permitting, compliance management, monitoring, assessment, cleanups and outreach.

## State of the Agency

Although we are not a large Department, our vital mission spans the entire state. Our mission is to protect and enhance Arizona's environment – the air, water and land that sustains us.



- In order for ADEQ to fulfill our mission and meet our state and federally mandated responsibilities, it is critical that the agency receives adequate state funding in addition to federal fund sources by establishing permit fees that are sufficient to cover direct and indirect costs of permit issuance and administration, and securing other funding sources with long term stability to cover costs of agency activities not related to permits, such as setting quality standards or writing rules.
- ADEQ's FY25 budget is comprised of 25% federal funds, 29% non-appropriated state funds, and 46% appropriated state funds.

## Engaging Communities

ADEQ has enhanced its community engagement activities and made it a priority to listen to and serve all residents, where they are and in the manner in which they prefer.

- Five Community Liaisons bridge the gaps between Arizonans, local communities, non-profit organizations and ADEQ.
- An Environmental Justice Coordinator facilitates efforts to ensure pollution does not disproportionately impact any group.
- By developing mutually respectful relationships with Tribes, a Tribal Liaison represents Tribal interests related to potential impacts from ADEQ's water and air permitting and land management actions.
- The Border Team works closely with environmental and public health partners on both sides of the border.
- ADEQ's AZ Community Science Alliance provides comprehensive training and resources for volunteers to gather high-quality, credible data crucial for environmental protection, as well as provides environmental educational opportunities and curriculum.

**Achievements**

**30** active volunteer groups | **150** volunteers

**\$5 million** total cost savings to ADEQ

**7** waterbody segments delisted | **71,000 pounds** of trash removed

## Advanced Water Purification (AWP)

Water scarcity is a major issue in the Southwest, and ADEQ is taking action to help secure our water future. AWP converts recycled water, or treated wastewater, into safe, reliable drinking water. This will reduce Arizona's dependence on traditional surface and groundwater sources, ensuring a consistent, drought-proof supply of clean water for everyone in our state. Following more than three years of collaborating with the AWP Technical Advisory Group that ADEQ convened and engaging stakeholders and the public, ADEQ released the AWP draft rule. The draft rule is the next step in ADEQ's effort to develop a robust regulatory framework for AWP that will give water providers another tool to diversify and expand Arizona's water portfolio, deliver safe drinking water to their communities and support the state's growing population and economy. ADEQ is on track to conduct the formal rulemaking process during the fall of 2024 and expects the new AWP rule to be in place and effective in the first quarter of 2025.

## Aquifer Water Quality Standards (AWQS)

Designed to protect the State's aquifers – all of which have been designated for drinking water-protected use – AWQS are used in ADEQ's Aquifer Protection Program (APP), as well as remediation projects under the WQARF, Voluntary Remediation Program, and others. In 2021, the Auditor General recommended ADEQ open a rulemaking docket to adopt the seven federal drinking water Maximum Contaminant Levels (MCLs) that have either not been established in the AWQS or, have been established but are misaligned. ADEQ is in the rulemaking process to adopt the following MCLs as AWQS: arsenic, bromate, chlorite, microbiological contaminants, haloacetic acids, total trihalomethanes, and uranium. ADEQ has conducted outreach and engaged with stakeholders and Tribal Nations about AWQS and expects the rule to become effective next spring.

## Onsite Wastewater/Cesspools

Old, failing septic systems and outlawed cesspools are discharging water that contains bacteria, viruses and chemicals into groundwater sources Arizonans rely on for drinking and other uses. Arizona has about 600,000 onsite wastewater systems (e.g., septic systems) servicing private residences and businesses, about 115,000 of which were built before 1970 and have likely failed. Outlawed in 1976, Arizona also has up to 75,000 cesspools (waste disposal pits) still in operation. ADEQ is addressing these issues by:

- Working with our delegated local authorities in all 15 counties to locate these systems and remove them from service,
- Partnering with Gila County and the Water Infrastructure Finance Authority of Arizona (WIFA) to fund closure and replacement of failing septic systems and cesspools with modern, permitted systems,
- Teaming up with Arizona State University and the Arizona Board of Regents to create a pilot tool to predict the likely location for cesspools, unpermitted septic systems, and failing septic systems.
- Leveraging existing groundwater data to explore creating the first-of-its-kind Nitrogen Management Area (NMA) to guide local permitting authorities in selecting septic systems that treat for the pollutant, nitrogen, in areas where this common septic pollutant has been identified in groundwater at elevated levels.

## Ozone

Ozone is a harmful air pollutant that forms when nitrogen oxides (NOx) and volatile organic compounds (VOCs) react in sunlight. It can cause coughing, breathing difficulties, lung damage, worsen asthma, and increase the risk of premature death from heart or lung conditions. ADEQ is working with Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG), Maricopa County and other impacted stakeholders to reduce ozone and develop a State Implementation Plan for the Phoenix-Mesa Nonattainment Area. We have also convened the Ground Level Ozone Research Team, consisting of members from ADEQ,

MAG, Arizona's public universities, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Office of Research and Development and EPA Region 9 to research and better understand ozone and ozone formation in the Phoenix-Mesa Nonattainment Area. ADEQ continues to encourage the community to reduce ozone and follow ADEQ's air quality forecasts and adjust activities accordingly, like exercising indoors or early in the morning. Reduce ozone by driving less, carpooling, keeping your vehicle tuned, avoiding idling, refueling in the evening, using low-VOC products, and choosing ENERGY STAR appliances.

## Solid Waste Fees & Rulemaking

The Solid Waste Program provides critical permitting and inspection of facilities like landfills, used oil handlers, transfer stations, biohazardous medical waste and composting operations to ensure the protection of public health and the environment. ADEQ is working on rules to update the current solid waste fees, including establishing new fees for aspects of the Program that were not set when ADEQ moved to a fee-based model in 2012. An internal financial review of the Program determined current fees are insufficient to effectively implement and sustain the Program. The purpose of the rulemaking is to ensure fairness among the regulated community, as well as achieve self-sufficiency of the Solid Waste Program. The proposed rule adjusts fees that are already in statute and provides for an annual adjustment based upon the Consumer Price Index. ADEQ has conducted robust stakeholder outreach and engagement and expects the new rule will be in place and effective by January 2025.

## Solid Waste Infrastructure for Recycling (SWIFR) Program

ADEQ is modernizing our state's 30-year-old Solid Waste Management Plan to build a more resilient and environmentally-conscious future. ADEQ is engaging stakeholders statewide and leveraging \$700,000 from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act to help create a new and improved plan for our state, covering trash reduction, reuse, recycling, and composting.

## Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS)

In April 2024, EPA announced new federal drinking water standards for PFAS in drinking water to safeguard public health and enhance water quality nationwide, and designated two PFAS (PFOA and PFOS) as hazardous substances. ADEQ has been providing PFAS assistance to public drinking water systems for more than six years, including sampling more than 680 systems (see ADEQ PFAS Interactive Data Map: [bit.ly/myPFASmap](http://bit.ly/myPFASmap)) and prioritizing nearly \$50 million dollars in state and federal funds for treating PFAS in drinking water. The discovery of PFAS in Arizona drinking water systems will require use of limited WQARF program resources to investigate the source of the PFAS and conduct clean-up activities. ADEQ continues to move forward with compliance plans for EPA's new regulations, while monitoring anticipated additional proposed federal PFAS regulations.

## WQARF Registry (State Superfund)

The WQARF is the State's Superfund program, which cleans up the most polluted sites in Arizona. This program provides Arizona businesses with a more equitable approach than the Federal Superfund program, which can hold one entity accountable for all cleanup costs regardless of their small contribution to the site. ADEQ works with 10 active Community Advisory Boards (CABs), which represent 22 WQARF sites.

