

A Credible, Transparent, Turn-Key Solution: What it Takes to Make Water Quality Trading Work

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The quality, credibility and transparency of water quality trading programs are critical. Strict standards governing the creation and use of offset credits provide assurances regulators need and the public expects to protect and enhance water quality. The Freshwater Trust has developed a transparent turn-key approach to water quality compliance that removes risk and uncertainty for facility managers, making the purchase of water quality credits a viable compliance alternative for addressing excess thermal or nutrient loads. As agencies set water quality limits for wastewater facilities, permittees need practical solutions to meet tough new requirements. Recently, conservation organizations and regulators came to an agreement on methods to calculate and quantify the temperature benefit of planting riparian trees. The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality approved these standards and protocols, clearing the way for quantified benefits from restoration actions to be registered as credits and used by permittees to comply with regulatory requirements. With regulator-approved metrics and infrastructure to track performance in place, The Freshwater Trust has developed a model that can finance all project costs on the front-end, and then sell the measured, quantified ecological benefit, or credit, to facilities to meet compliance requirements, without financial and performance risk for permittees.