



OREGON CANNABIS

Cannabis and Water Quality



Oregon
Department
of Agriculture

Agricultural Water Quality Program
www.oregon.gov/ODA
(503) 986-4700

What are the Oregon Department of Agriculture's rules for water and growing cannabis?

- In Oregon, growing cannabis is an agricultural activity and Oregon's agricultural water quality rules apply. More information can be found at: <https://oda.direct/AgWQ>
- Two important rules apply to all agricultural producers (others may apply depending on your operation).
 - Pollution Rule: Agricultural pollution cannot enter streams, ditches, or ponds, or be in a location that is likely to enter these water bodies.
 - Riparian Rule: Agricultural activities must not prevent streamside vegetation from growing and establishing.
- Contact the ODA Agricultural Water Quality Program to learn about the rules that apply to you.

How can I get rid of excess irrigation water?

The Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and ODA coordinate to manage nonpoint source agricultural runoff through implementation of agricultural water quality management area plans.

- **Septic systems**

DEQ or the local county may regulate an onsite septic system. Discharge of industrial wastewater into an onsite septic system is prohibited since these systems are only designed to treat domestic wastewater. In addition, planting and growing marijuana on top of a septic drainfield or irrigating and harvesting over a drainfield may affect a residential septic system's performance.

- **Public sewer systems**

Growers and processors may be able to discharge waste water to a local sanitary sewer. Pretreatment before discharge may be required. Contact your local city or county for information about connecting or discharging to a sanitary sewer system.

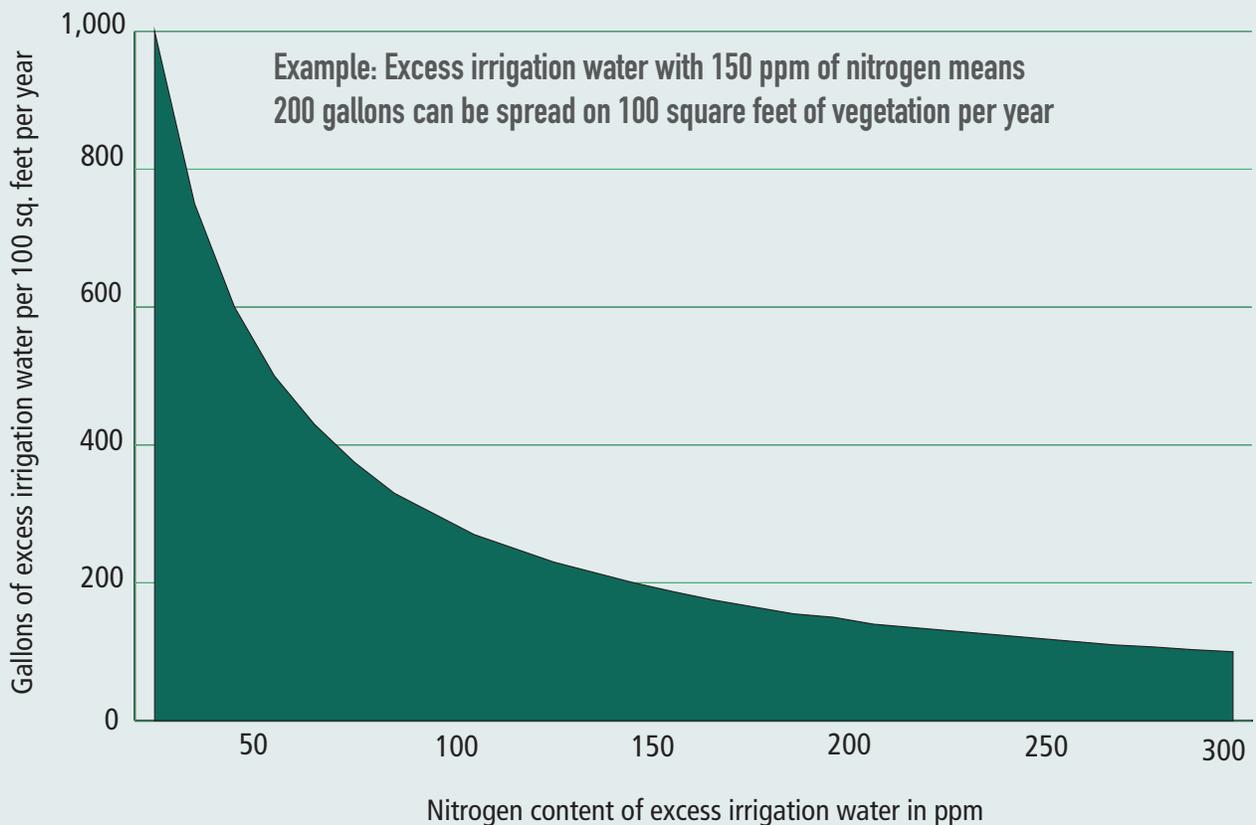
- **Land application**

ODA recommends spreading excess irrigation water on vegetation at agronomic rates. DEQ has a regulatory role in managing wastewater from growing operations if it is being discharged into a sanitary sewer system, an onsite septic system, or being discharged directly into a surface water body through a ditch, channel, or pipe. Surface water discharges may require a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit. For more information, contact DEQ at 503-229-5696 and contact the ODA Agricultural Water Quality Program at 503-986-4700.

Outdoor considerations

- Maintain access roads to prevent ruts, gullies, and sheet erosion that contribute sediment to streams, ditches, and ponds.
- Excavation of grow sites must not contribute sediment to streams, ditches, and ponds. Use silt fences and straw bales around grow sites.
- Ensure that culverts and stream crossings are built properly and not causing erosion.
- Do not locate grow operations near septic drain fields.
- Vegetation is your friend. Maintain vegetated areas (grass, shrubs, trees) between grow sites and streams, ditches, and ponds, and do not remove streamside vegetation.
- Irrigation water use from private wells, streams, ditches, or ponds may require a permit from the Oregon Water Resources Department, 503-986-0900.

Land area needed to safely apply excess irrigation water



Land application of excess irrigation water from indoor grows

- Dumping excess irrigation water into a stream, ditch, or pond is prohibited.
- Test the nitrogen in excess irrigation water prior to application to know the concentration in parts per million (ppm). Use the table to determine appropriate size of area needed to apply excess irrigation water.
- Do not spread excess irrigation water within 48 hours after a storm event or when weather conditions will lead to runoff.
- Excess irrigation water application area should be flat and vegetated in order to use excess nitrogen and prevent pollution.
- Vegetation receiving the excess irrigation water must be cut and removed. Vegetation needs to be growing to use nitrogen. Example: mow the grass and remove the cuttings from the area where wastewater is applied.
- If vegetation is turning yellow or dying at location of application, nitrogen levels are too high. You may need to dilute the excess irrigation water more or spread it over a larger area.
- Practice conservation actions such as:
 - Plant native grasses, shrubs, and trees for extra filtration and nutrient uptake.
 - Install silt fences, straw bales, mulch, and/or wattles in sensitive areas where runoff could reach surface water.
 - Collect runoff in a retention basin.