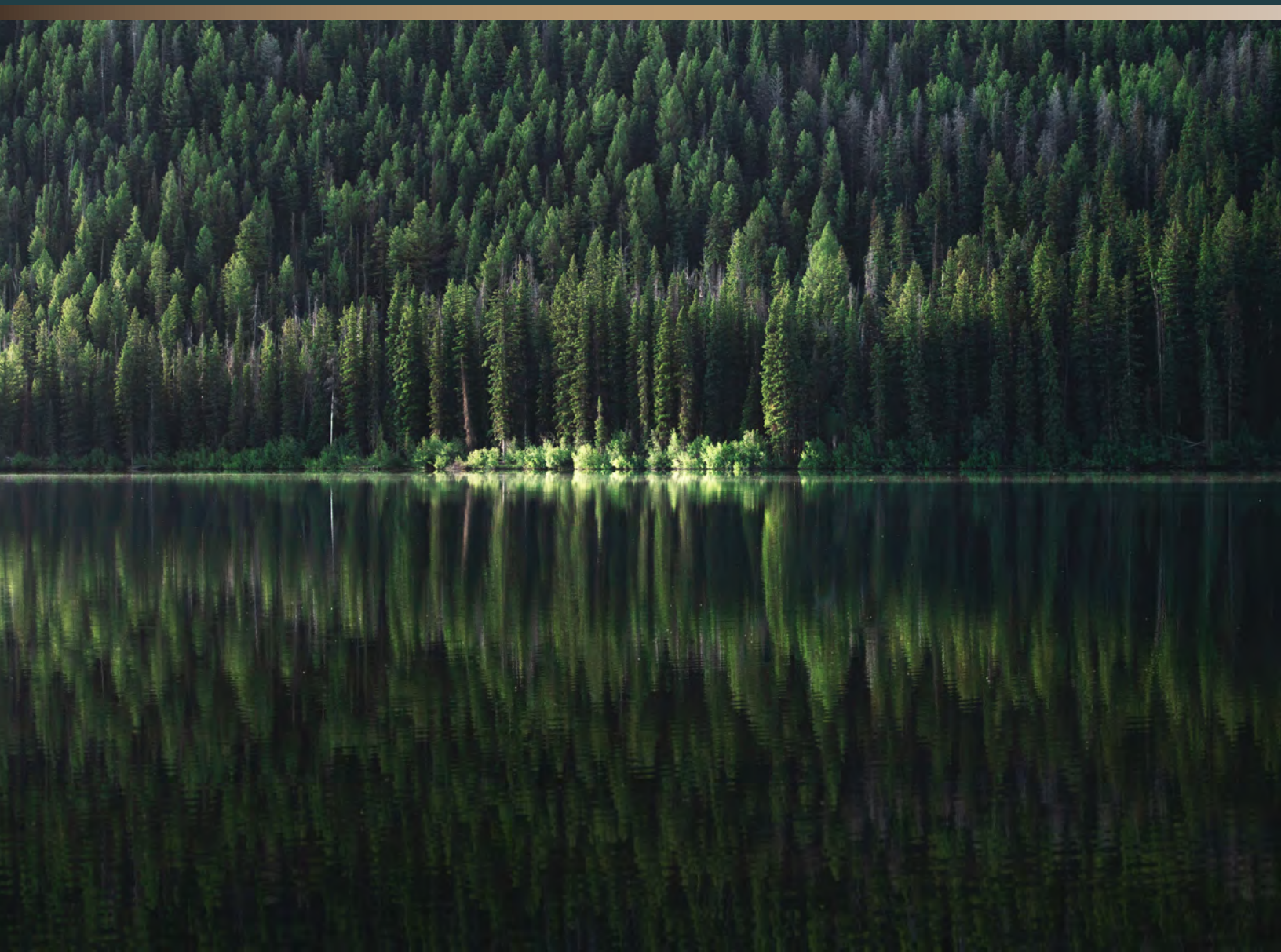
STATE OF IDAHO
DEPARTMENT OF
ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

STRATEGIC PLAN

FY2027-2030





Mission

To protect human health and the quality of Idaho's air, land, and water.

Vision

An Idaho where the quality of our environment enhances healthy living and supports thriving communities.

Values

Integrity. Service. Teamwork. Results.

VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Director's Message

I am pleased to share the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality's (DEQ's) Strategic Plan for fiscal years 2027-2030. This plan outlines our priorities for the next four years and reflects our commitment to protecting Idaho's air, land, and water while providing effective, timely service to the people and communities we serve.

Idaho continues to grow and change, and DEQ must be ready to meet the needs that come with that growth. Over the next four years, we will focus on improving how we serve Idahoans, including reducing permitting timelines and backlogs and strengthening our ability to recruit and retain a skilled workforce. By focusing on these priorities, we can better support communities, support responsible economic growth, and ensure DEQ is prepared to meet Idaho's needs now and in the future.

I'm proud of the work DEQ employees do every day and of their commitment to the people and communities we serve. This plan provides a path forward as we continue working together to protect Idaho's environment and support the quality of life we all value.

Core Services

Our core services are the foundation of DEQ's work and guide how we respond to changing fiscal, regulatory, and environmental conditions. These services span our air, water, and waste management programs, as well as our compliance assistance and outreach efforts to:

- Manage air quality to ensure compliance with federal health-based standards.
- Protect soil and water from hazardous, solid, industrial, and mining wastes and petroleum contamination.
- Ensure proper operation of wastewater systems, and the subsequent disposal of wastewater in accordance with regulations and permitted limits.
- Manage, mitigate, and remediate contaminated areas.
- Protect public health and the environment at and around the Idaho National Laboratory (INL).
- Maintain and improve surface and groundwater quality.
- Ensure delivery of safe and reliable drinking water from public water systems.
- Prevent, prepare for, and respond to public health emergencies.
- Encourage and empower Idaho citizens, businesses, and communities to be environmentally responsible.



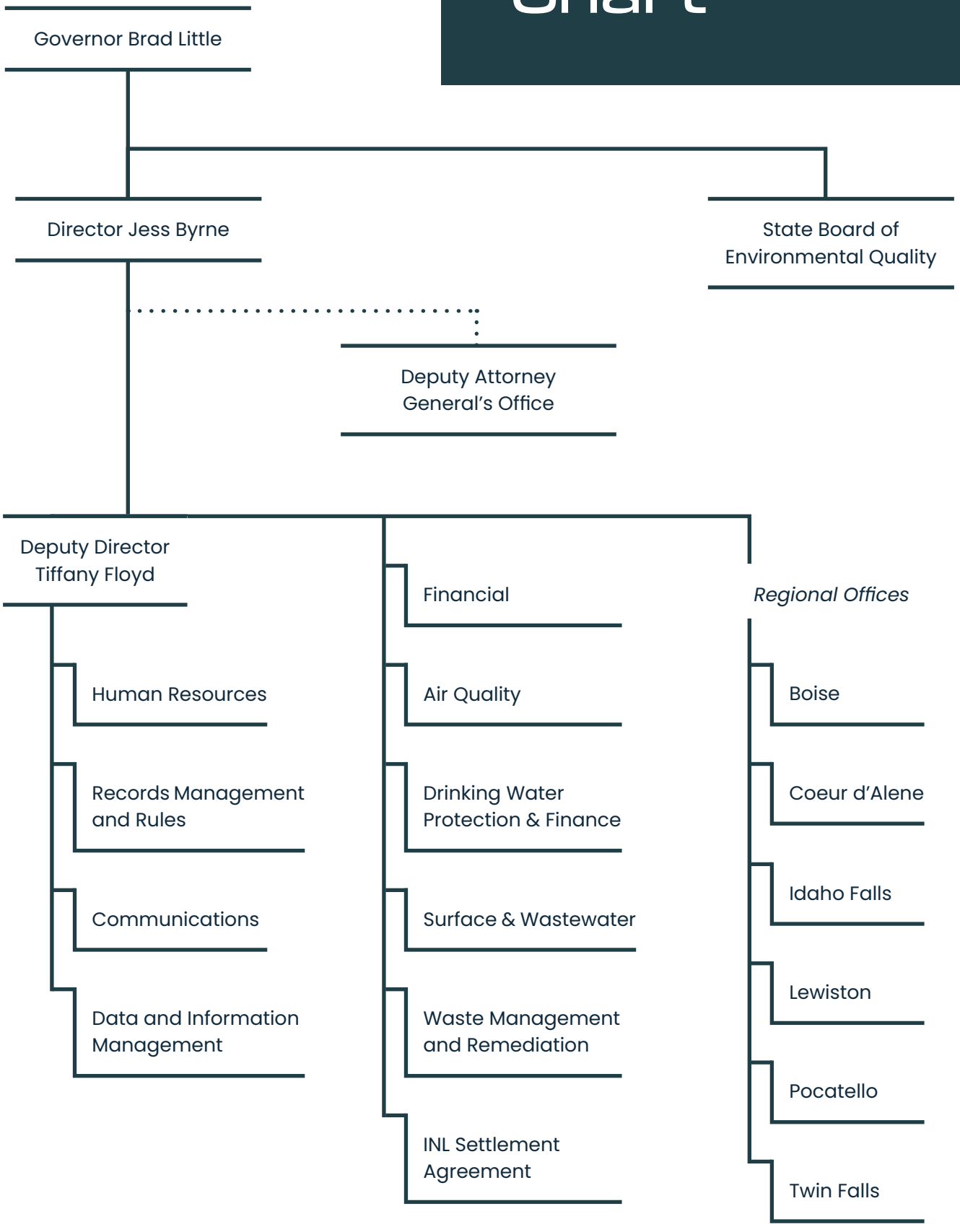
YOUR DEQ

Protecting human health and the environment

The Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), established by the Idaho Environmental Protection and Health Act (Idaho Code 39-101 et seq.), protects human health and the environment.

DEQ implements and enforces delegated federal programs under the Clean Air, Clean Water, Safe Drinking Water, and Resource Conservation and Recovery Acts, and state environmental laws and rules. This regulatory responsibility covers activities that ensure Idaho's air, land, water, and citizens are protected from pollution.

Organizational Chart





GOALS AND PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Goal 1

MAKE RECOGNIZABLE AND MEASURABLE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS

Air

PM 1. Monitored airsheds meet national ambient air quality standards.

TARGET: 100%

This performance measure ensures DEQ maintains a statewide air quality monitoring network facilitating the ability to identify airsheds in need of improvement and ensuring compliance with the national ambient air quality standards. To fulfill this, DEQ implements programs that address emissions from pollution sources such as industry, open burning, and woodstoves as well as conducts outreach to the public about ways to help improve air quality. The target represents DEQ's commitment to maintain this network and to continue to meet air quality standards throughout the state.

Water

PM 2. Increase the percentage of assessed rivers and streams supporting their beneficial uses.

TARGET: 38%

DEQ assesses Idaho's surface waters to identify beneficial use support status and to inform the development of Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs)—science-based plans that guide reductions in pollution from point and nonpoint sources. These assessments and resulting TMDLs provide a foundation for coordinated water quality improvement efforts across watersheds. DEQ will enhance public access to TMDL data and develop a strategy for long-term trend monitoring to evaluate implementation effectiveness and support 5-year TMDL reviews. The target is based on analysis of historical trends and holds DEQ accountable for improvement.

Waste

PM 3. Reduce the number of known contaminated sites.

TARGET: 220

(10% reduction of the 246 known, open contaminated sites).

This performance measure tracks the number of identified leaking underground storage tanks (LUST) and general remediation sites. DEQ reduces the number of known sites through our assessment, cleanup, and remediation programs. Outreach and education with site owners and operators ensure the use of and collaboration with DEQ programs. Every year, DEQ closes several contaminated sites, but new ones inevitably arise. This measure ensures our focus is on improvement of all known sites. The target is based on the number of contaminated sites known in the previous year, plus any new sites found, and reduced by the number of sites contained. This number is then compared to the previous year to determine if 10% reduction was achieved.

Goal 2

PROVIDE OUTSTANDING CUSTOMER SERVICE AS A TRUSTED SOURCE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERSHIP

Permits

PM 4. Develop and update public facing tools to provide resources to regulated entities, community leaders, and other stakeholders in obtaining permits or ensuring compliance.

TARGET: 4 PER YEAR

DEQ aims to improve resources, such as forms and/or checklists, available for use by regulated entities, community leaders, and other stakeholders who need to obtain permits. DEQ will track tool usage and accept feedback on how to improve these resources. The projects depend on staff and monetary availability. The target was set after considering the workload of necessary staff and funding available.

Compliance

PM 5. Increase the compliance rate of inspected facilities through outreach and education.

TARGET: 82%

Increasing compliance requires establishing relationships with regulated facilities and removing barriers. DEQ will leverage data-driven resources to improve compliance and inspection strategies. The target was set after consideration of the current compliance rate of 79%.

Goal 3

FOSTER A CULTURE OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Permits

PM 6. Increase the percentage of permits issued before deadline by streamlining processes.

TARGET: 81%

DEQ will reduce barriers to issuing timely permits. This goal requires improvements in the permit application process, including allocating additional resources to permit writers, developing more effective tracking methods, and ensuring that facilities and consultants submit accurate information with their applications. The target was set after considering historical trends.

Data Management

PM 7. Increase the efficiency of monitoring, assessment, compliance, permitting, and enforcement programs through improved data management and workflows.

TARGET: 4 PROCESSES IMPROVED PER YEAR

DEQ will prioritize projects based on need, improvement in performance and time to complete. Among other projects, DEQ will work towards modernizing the permit application processes and completion of transitioning to a new document management system (Laserfiche).

Goal 4

ATTRACT, DEVELOP AND RETAIN A QUALIFIED AND COMPETENT WORKFORCE

Retention

There are two performance indicators:

PM 8. Reduce the turnover rate.

TARGET: 8%

PM 9. Decrease the vacancy rate.

TARGET: 7%

DEQ aims to attract and retain qualified staff by providing a supportive and collaborative environment ensuring all voices are heard. DEQ's leadership reviews and updates our employee engagement action plan routinely, which includes a variety of meetings to hear from staff about enhancing their work life at DEQ. In addition, DEQ will continue to evaluate staff salaries to ensure its as competitive as possible. The targets are based on FY26 rates 7.5% and 6.0% respectively and holds DEQ accountable for maintaining or reducing these rates.



Emerging Issues and Opportunities

On a 4-year horizon, issues may arise that are short-term or may lead to a shift in the agency's focus and priorities. By anticipating future challenges, DEQ will be better positioned to adjust if needed, while continuing to support our core functions and services. Emerging issues and opportunities are identified below.

Air Quality

As Idaho continues to experience population and industrial growth, the demand for timely and health-protective air quality permits has increased significantly. To remain responsive to economic expansion, the air quality permitting program must implement streamlined approaches and process improvements to ensure efficient permit issuance. The adoption of a General Permit Rule for specific industries represents a major shift in permitting processes, reducing administrative burdens for both DEQ and industry. To maintain regulatory effectiveness, the air quality permitting program will also explore opportunities to modernize internal processes.

Drinking Water

PER- AND POLYFLUOROALKYL SUBSTANCES

In April 2024, EPA announced a final drinking water regulation that sets legally enforceable limits for six PFAS chemicals in public drinking water systems. Those chemicals include PFOA, PFOS, PFNA, PFHxS, and GenX. Under this regulation community and non-community non-transient public water systems have until April of 2027 to complete their initial monitoring requirements under the rule and must comply with the maximum contaminant levels (MCLs) by April of 2031. Idaho DEQ adopted the rule during the 2025 legislative session and submitted a primacy application for enforcement



authority over the rule to EPA on April 22, 2026. DEQ currently has interim primacy of the rule and awaits EPA's final approval of the PFAS primacy application. Interim primacy provides authority for DEQ to work with public water systems and enter into agreements when necessary to extend compliance timelines. The Department is focusing on providing compliance assistance and education as systems work to complete their initial monitoring by the April 2027 compliance deadline. On May 18, 2026 EPA announced intent to repeal MCLs for four analytes and extend the MCL compliance deadline through a revision to the final rule by the end of 2026. DEQ is watching and assessing federal actions and will respond accordingly upon final EPA action.

Surface Water

Harmful algal blooms (HABs) are an emerging water quality concern in Idaho, with increasing frequency and geographic spread across lakes, reservoirs, and slow-moving rivers. Driven by a combination of excess nutrients, warm temperatures, and changing hydrologic conditions, HABs can produce toxins harmful to humans, pets, and wildlife, threatening recreational uses, drinking water sources, and ecological health. Over the past several years, Idaho has seen a rise in public health advisories related to cyanobacteria blooms, prompting a need for more proactive monitoring, public education, and cross-agency coordination.

At the same time, the growing awareness of HABs presents an opportunity to strengthen partnerships between state agencies, local governments, and watershed groups. Targeted data collection, nutrient source identification, and community-based solutions—such as riparian restoration and improved land management—can help mitigate bloom risk while supporting broader water quality goals. Idaho's investments in watershed planning, nonpoint source reduction, and citizen science provide a strong foundation for developing responsive strategies to this evolving challenge.

Waste

EPA's Solid Waste Infrastructure for Recycling (SWIFR) cooperative agreement grants for states and territories funds activities that support long-term planning and data collection to achieve progress toward the National Recycling Goal, Food Loss and Waste Reduction Goal, and to advance a circular economy for materials. These grants also support the state-led implementation of plans to advance post-

consumer materials management. DEQ has received as part of the SWIFR round one federal funding distribution to develop a statewide recycling and waste diversion plan. The round one workplan is focused on two goals: 1) developing and implementing comprehensive solid waste and recycling data collection and 2) developing plans to advance recycling and materials management in Idaho. The workplan for round one will be completed by September 30, 2026.

In February 2026 the EPA notified DEQ that the Solid Waste Program would receive a second round of SWIFR funding. The amount allocated for round two is approximately $902,000. DEQ is developing the round two workplan in coordination with the EPA. Once the workplan is approved the second period of performance will be from October 1, 2026, through September 30, 2029.

Upon award of the second round of funding, the second-round SWIFR work plan will build upon the foundational planning, data development, and regional coordination established during the initial grant period. The overall purpose of this funding is to transition from planning and baseline development toward implementation, collaboration, investment, and long-term system sustainability.

Federal Funding

As federal priorities shift and funding uncertainties increase, DEQ must remain flexible and forward-thinking. Reductions in federal support through EPA grant programs, regulatory oversight, or delegated authority may place a greater burden on the state. DEQ is proactively evaluating how we deliver our programs and fund our services while working to maintain implementation authority, known as primacy, where we currently have it.

Other External Factors

- Population growth
- Emergency or other natural disasters
- Federal regulatory actions or mandates
- Changes to federal grants
- Availability of staff
- Availability of funding

