

Portland Harbor Superfund Site

Portland Utility Board Quarterly Update



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PORTLAND HARBOR SUPERFUND

The Portland Harbor Superfund Site, which lies within a 10-mile stretch of the lower Willamette River, received EPA's final cleanup plan in early 2017. The cleanup plan is designed to reduce risks to human health and the environment using cleanup techniques such as dredging, capping, enhanced natural recovery, and monitored natural recovery. The cleanup plan calls for removal of about 3 million cubic yards of contaminated sediments and active remediation of 23,305 lineal feet of river bank. EPA estimates that the cleanup will cost approximately \$1.05 billion and take around 30 years to complete.

Getting a settlement among all the parties to share the costs of cleanup is a significant and ongoing task. The City is one of approximately 100 parties participating in an out-of-court settlement process to allocate cleanup costs among all parties. The goal of the allocation is to get parties to an agreement so that they can present a settlement offer to EPA for implementing the cleanup. This allocation settlement process began in 2008 and final negotiations are likely to be a multi-year process because of the number of parties and complexity of assessing responsibility for 120+ years of industrial activity. EPA has notified parties that while the allocation process is taking place, it expects parties to start designing the remedies that will ultimately be conducted.

If the out of court settlement is successful, the parties will settle their liabilities with EPA by performing the cleanup or funding other parties who will be doing the work. The Portland Harbor cleanup will be costly, but much of the expenditures will be spread out over many years across every stage of the cleanup including the engineering of the cleanup remedy, construction, and long-term performance monitoring.

UPDATE ON EPA'S PROCESS

Since the release of the final cleanup plan, EPA has been working on three main areas to make progress toward cleanup: site-wide remedy design, baseline sampling and public involvement. Due to concerns that not enough parties are stepping up to do design work, EPA leadership traveled to Portland to announce its plan to expedite the site-wide design process. While in Portland, EPA

leadership met with Mayor Wheeler and Commissioner Fish, along with others, to share their vision and timeline to move this next stage in preparing for the cleanup more quickly.

Remedy Design announcement and timeline

In addition to visiting Portland in December, EPA sent a letter to all Potentially Responsible Parties announcing its plan for the remedy design phase. In that letter EPA requested parties to “step forward to conduct 100% remedial design for 100% of the site designated for active cleanup.” EPA would like to have all negotiations finalized in 2019 in order to start design work and avoid enforcement actions. The City is currently working on design at the River Mile 11 East site along with negotiating an agreement to start design work at the Willamette Cove site with partners, the State of Oregon, Department of Defense and the Port of Portland.

Baseline Sampling

A group of parties known as the “pre-Remedial Design Group” (Arkema, Inc., The Marine Group LLC, Evraz Inc., and Schnitzer Steel Industries Inc.) continue their efforts on the baseline sampling. This is an extensive site-wide sampling of sediment, fish tissue, and water, typically done at Superfund sites before cleanup activities begin. Baseline sampling establishes existing conditions for future comparisons. Most of this sampling is now complete, and chemistry results have been submitted to EPA. Sampling for some types of baseline data will continue through the rest of the year to capture different conditions in the river.

EPA Public Forum

Due to the partial shutdown of the federal government in December and January, EPA rescheduled the March quarterly Portland Harbor Superfund public forum. The meeting will now take place on Wednesday, April 17, from 6 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at Portland State University. Location details and meeting agenda will be available at a later date. If you are interested in receiving notices for upcoming Public Forums or would like notes and presentations from previous forums, please contact Laura Knudsen with the EPA at knudsen.laura@epa.gov, 206-553-1838.

UPDATE ON CITY OF PORTLAND’S WORK ON SUPERFUND

Since the release of the final cleanup plan, the City has been working closely with our partners to move the cleanup forward efficiently and effectively while supporting EPA’s efforts to engage Portlanders in the process. Below are updates on two areas of work: Community Involvement Program Launch, and Remedy Design at River Mile 11 East (RM 11E).

City of Portland Community Involvement Program Launch

The Portland Harbor team completed its review and analysis of the information gathered in program development efforts over the last year. Through various collaboration efforts, the City collected rich input from Portland's diverse communities that illuminates what they see as key issues for the Superfund cleanup.

Based on the feedback communicated by Portlanders, the City developed a program framework to address those priorities. Committed to community involvement throughout this program development process, the City is now returning to communities who offered their initial input to present the proposed framework for feedback to ensure that we are on the right track. This program includes four program areas including Public Education, Access and Transparency, Convening and Collaboration and Community Benefits. Within these programmatic areas the Portland Harbor Team is proposing five initiatives over five years. Feedback from community members to date has been positive, requiring only small refinements to put the City on track to officially launch the program in March. The Portland Harbor team will present the community involvement program framework at the March 5th PUB meeting.

The River Mile 11 East (RM 11E): Design Phase

The City continues its early engineering design work for the cleanup in the River Mile 11 East project area. This is a 36-acre area of the river located adjacent to the eastern shore, just south of the Fremont Bridge. The City is partnering with five other parties (Cargill Inc., CBS Corporation, DIL Trust, Glacier Northwest, and PacifiCorp) to complete design work for EPA's cleanup plan in this area.

In February 2019, the group submitted a Basis of Design Report to EPA, which is a major step in outlining site conditions, preliminary design criteria for the cleanup in this area, and considerations for determining an appropriate remedial approach. This work starts to address some of the challenges of implementing a remedy in this area, including working docks with ships regularly coming in and out of port for active shoreline businesses, underwater debris, overwater structures, and submerged power cables that transect the river. The report is currently undergoing review by EPA and its partners.

In addition, the group of RM 11E parties continues to engage the public and be available for questions at EPA's quarterly public forums for Portland Harbor.