



Frequently Asked Questions

Ashland Rail Yard Cleanup

The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality is proposing a revision of the recommended cleanup plan for Ashland Rail Yard. The recommended revised cleanup will allow most of the 21-acre site to be safely developed for industrial, commercial, or urban residential use.

DEQ has reviewed Union Pacific's plan and agrees it meets state criteria to protect human health and the environment. The most significant change to the approach is that contaminated soil will be consolidated and capped on a portion of the site instead of being hauled away to a landfill.

Why is the contaminated soil no longer being removed from the site?

Capping excavated soil on-site prevents exposure to the public, addresses community concerns about transporting the soil through town, and significantly decreases the project's carbon footprint.

What will the capped area look like?

The capped area will be graded to a level consistent with the rest of the site and it will be covered in native vegetation. A fence will surround the capped three acres on the eastern edge of the site to prevent trespassing and possible damage to the cap.

Will the contaminated soil left on site impact surrounding properties, streams, and groundwater?

No. Capping the contaminated soil will prevent it from spreading to surrounding properties and streams. The contaminants are immobile and stay tightly bound to soil. Groundwater monitoring did not find any indication of shallow groundwater contamination migrating off the site. Also, the city provides drinking water in the area through the municipal water supply.

What are the contaminants of concern?

The contaminants consist of polynuclear aromatic hydrocarbon compounds in shallow soil and metals and petroleum products – including diesel and bunker C fuel oil – in shallow soil and limited areas of shallow groundwater.

The metals include lead and arsenic. Arsenic may be naturally occurring and associated with locomotive maintenance and petroleum products.

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Is the site safe to use now?

That depends on the use. The site is currently vacant so there is no immediate risk to human health or the environment. Other uses of the Ashland Rail Yard could pose a risk to human health and the environment. So, cleanup is needed to allow future use, such as urban residential or commercial.

What can the site be used for when the cleanup is complete?

The western 11.7 acres of the site will be available for urban residential or commercial use. After capping, the eastern three acres will also be available for development, recreation, or greenspace.

Have you thought about using mushrooms to clean up the site? Or other plants?

Phytoremediation, the treatment of pollutants with mushrooms or plants, is a remedial option at some sites. But given the types of contaminants and concentrations, DEQ thinks the most effective and applicable cleanup options have been reviewed for the site.

What measures will be taken to lessen the cleanup work's impact on the surrounding neighborhood?

The cleanup project will be akin to construction. There will be heavy equipment including tractors and dump trucks. Cleanup crews will take steps to limit dust when moving contaminated soil at the site.

Background

The Ashland Rail Yard operated as a locomotive maintenance, service, and railcar repair facility between 1887 and 1986. Facility operations resulted in environmental contamination at the site.

Previously, DEQ issued no further action determinations for approximately 6.4 acres of the original 21 acres. The eastern 2.85 acres of the original property are currently used for agricultural purposes and not believed to have been associated with rail yard-related activities. So, the cleanup plan is related to the remaining 11.7 acres.

In 2001, Union Pacific proposed and, after significant public engagement, DEQ approved a cleanup plan to address contamination for potential future single-family residential site use. Union Pacific did not implement the 2001 decision in response to community concerns about truck traffic, deed restriction changes, and an increase in some of the applicable regulatory cleanup limits, which meant not as much contamination would need to be cleaned up. The railroad has since collected additional data and has now proposed a new cleanup plan to address contamination.

For more information

Detailed information supporting DEQ's recommended revision of the remedial action is located on DEQ's web site at ordeq.org/AshlandRailYardInfo. If you do not have web access and want to review the project file, contact DEQ Project Manager Margaret Oscilia at 503-726-6522.



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