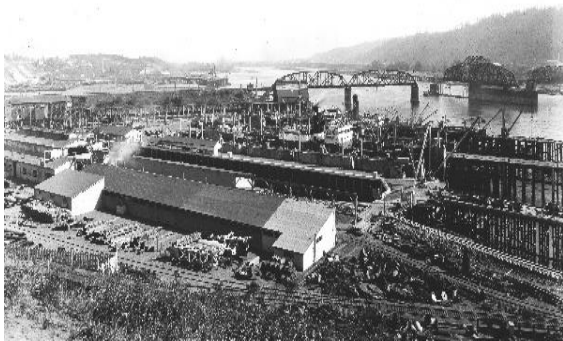


Willamette Cove Upland Final Cleanup Plan

March 2021

The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality is working with the Port of Portland, Metro and others to complete cleanup of historical contamination at Willamette Cove. The property is a former industrial site in North Portland along the bank of the Willamette River's Portland Harbor Superfund Site. DEQ is providing oversight of the contamination investigation and cleanup upland of the riverbank under an agreement with Metro and the Port.

Metro is the current property owner. DEQ's cleanup options and ultimate selection are based on how Metro has said they plan to use the property in the future – a nature park with a trail. The Port previously owned and had operated facilities on a portion of the property now owned by Metro. The Port is a responsible party, meaning it is partially responsible for the site's contamination and is, therefore, partially liable for the upland's cleanup costs.



Willamette Cove looking upriver, circa 1923.

Background

The Willamette Cove property comprises nearly 27 acres and 3,000 feet of shoreline. The low-lying riverfront property is on the Willamette River north of downtown Portland and south of the St. Johns Bridge. Cathedral Park neighborhood is terraced above Willamette Cove, and St. Johns and University Park neighborhoods are north and south, respectively.

Willamette Cove's industrial use dates back to the early 1900s, including a lumber mill, plywood mill, barrel manufacturer and dry dock and ship repair facility. Industrial activities ended by the early 1980s. Metro purchased the property in 1996 and plans to preserve the land primarily as a natural area.

Previous industrial activities resulted in soil contamination. The contamination includes heavy metals, diesel fuel, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and dioxins. These chemicals pose a risk to human health and the environment. Information on the potential health effects from exposure to these contaminants is available in the 2013 Oregon Health Authority Health Consultation: <http://bit.ly/OHA-WillametteCove>.

Cleanup Status

DEQ has selected a final cleanup plan, called a Record of Decision, to address soil contamination on the upland portion of the Willamette Cove site. DEQ's decision follows a six-month public comment period on the recommended cleanup plan, and the review and consideration of comments received.

DEQ determined that the proposed remedy, described below, is protective of human health and the environment based on Metro's planned future use of the site, and is DEQ's selected cleanup.

Main Elements of the Final Cleanup Plan

- Remove all soil above hot spots, or elevated levels of contamination, for human health
- Remove all soil with metals above hot spot levels for plants and animals
- Consolidate the remaining contaminated soil under an engineered cap
- Place at least one foot of clean topsoil across the entire site

DEQ has also incorporated a contingency remedy in the final cleanup plan to provide flexibility as Metro finalizes their vision in developing the property into a park. The contingency remedy allows Metro to remove additional contaminated soil and transport the soil offsite for disposal at a waste facility.

Willamette Cove Access Concerns

The public may not access Willamette Cove prior to completion of the cleanup due to the following concerns for public safety:

- Direct contact with contaminated soils and beach sand.



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*DEQ is a leader in
restoring, maintaining
and enhancing the
quality of Oregon's air,
land and water.*

- Direct contact with physical hazards, including foundation remnants, rebar and other debris on the site and offshore underwater.
- Resident fish, fish that live in the area their entire lives, are likely to contain contaminants. People who eat these fish could be exposed to contamination. Resident fish include bass, carp and catfish. Learn more at <http://bit.ly/OHA-Fish>

Signs posted at Willamette Cove warn that contaminants remain at the site. Metro discourages access and the site is closed to the public. Oregon Department of State Lands prohibits anchoring in the river for more than 30 consecutive nights.

Final Cleanup Plan Frequently Asked Questions

When cleanup is done, will I be able to access the whole site?

Yes, DEQ's selected cleanup will allow for full access of the upland, on and off trails.

Why isn't DEQ requiring more contamination be taken off-site instead of having this as an option for Metro?

DEQ considers the following factors when selecting a cleanup plan: effectiveness, long-term reliability, implementability, implementation risk, and reasonableness of cost. The selected cleanup plan accomplishes equivalent protection to the full removal option, in terms of preventing people, plants and animals from being exposed to contamination. DEQ's selected cleanup plan also has lower implementation risk because it requires less transportation, which reduces chance of accidents/spills of contaminated material through neighborhoods and across the state. It also minimizes environmental costs, also called carbon footprint

What's next and when will cleanup be done?

Next steps in preparation for cleanup action include a final, large-scale soil sample collection effort to confirm the depth of excavation necessary to achieve cleanup goals. DEQ will also use this data to develop final plans for soil containment and off-site disposal.

Timing for completing the cleanup of the upland is also tied to the Portland Harbor in-water cleanup work, led by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. DEQ anticipates that substantial portions of the riverbank will be subject to remedial action, which will affect the upland remedy. DEQ and EPA are coordinating closely on this work along with other federal, state and local agency partners and the community.

Is the containment area safe? Does it really work? Can it withstand the Cascadia earthquake?

DEQ has successfully implemented similar on-site consolidation and capping at numerous sites along the Willamette River and across Oregon. Local examples include the Southwest Waterfront and The Fields Neighborhood Park. Engineers will design the consolidation area cap to withstand seismic and storm events.

Regarding a Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake, the impacts to the greater Portland area and the Willamette River will be significant and devastating, destroying infrastructure along and over the river. While such an earthquake would cause widespread damage to infrastructure and instant loss of life, damage to the consolidation area has relatively low potential to cause immediate harm to human health. If damaged, DEQ would require the property owner to restore the engineered cap.

For more information

You can learn more by visiting the Willamette Cove Upland webpage (ordeq.org/willamettecove), access all documents related to the Willamette Cove Upland on the Environmental Cleanup Site Information database (ordeq.org/ecsi2066) or contact the Project Manager, Erin McDonnell, at 503-229-6900 or erin.mcdonnell@deq.state.or.us.

Alternative formats

DEQ can provide documents in an alternate format or in a language other than English upon request. Call DEQ at 800-452-4011 or email deqinfo@deq.state.or.us.