

Fact Sheet

Columbia Slough Sediment Project Update – July 2005

This fact sheet provides an update on the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)/City of Portland (City) project to evaluate and cleanup, as necessary, contaminated sediments in the Columbia Slough. Details of the watershed-focused approach currently being developed by DEQ and the City were described in an earlier fact sheet (Columbia Slough Sediment Project Update - May 2003) <http://www.deq.state.or.us/nwr/cs.htm>.

Record of Decision (ROD) signed

The City and DEQ finalized the Feasibility Study for Columbia Slough sediments in March 2005. DEQ prepared a Staff Report summarizing the proposed cleanup approach. A public review and comment period on the proposed approach was held from April 1 to May 16, 2005 and DEQ discussed the approach at the Columbia Slough Watershed Council meeting held on April 25.

Several comments on the proposed approach were received. As a result of these comments DEQ clarified the description of the cleanup approach from that which was presented in the proposed plan. This clarification and a response to each comment received are presented in the Record of Decision (ROD) for the Columbia Slough Sediment. The ROD was signed by DEQ's Northwest Region Administrator, Dick Pedersen on July 19, 2005.

The three primary components of the cleanup approach for Slough sediment are:

1. Pollutant source reduction
2. Specific site cleanup
3. Long-term monitoring.

DEQ and the City have begun scoping and implementing aspects of these activities as described in the following sections.

Pollutant source reduction

The City is planning new pollution reduction facilities, while maintaining existing ones, to reduce stormwater inputs to the Slough. To date, 23 pollution reduction facilities have been constructed in the Columbia Slough watershed. In addition, the City maintains numerous swales within the watershed which also remove pollution from stormwater.

The DEQ Site Assessment program continues to identify potential private party contaminated sites along the Slough and evaluate them to determine their priority for cleanup. Thirty-eight (38) sites are currently identified as needing some type of investigation based on data available. This might consist of a preliminary assessment of potential contamination, or a remedial investigation where there is clear evidence of contamination. These sites will be assigned to DEQ cleanup project managers based on project ranking and staff availability. In the past year, 7 new sites have been added to the environmental cleanup site database (ECSI) via site discovery work or businesses entering into DEQ's Voluntary Cleanup Program. DEQ Site Assessment continues to work on discovery of new sites and perform assessments on Slough sites discovered in the previous two years.

The DEQ Hazardous Waste program developed a plan to provide technical assistance to businesses in the Slough watershed to promote proper management of industrial hazardous wastes. To date, 34 site visits have been conducted under this program. In March 2005, a workshop on best management practices for Auto Wrecking/Salvage Yards was provided to 14 salvage yard owners.

Portland's Industrial Stormwater program continues to inspect industries in the vicinity of contaminated sediments with the goal of identifying and eliminating current sources of pollution.

The total maximum daily load (TMDL) for the Slough was approved by EPA in 1998. The TMDLs established for the Slough include DDE, DDT, PCBs, dioxin, lead, chlorophyll a, pH, phosphorous, and temperature. TMDLs continue to be used as a basis for monitoring and controlling stormwater and industrial discharges to the Slough. DEQ has provided funding to the City of Portland and U.S. Geological Service to continue the evaluation of sources of toxic pollutants using semi-permeable membrane devices (SPMD) which can detect very low concentrations of contaminants in the water column.



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Specific site cleanup

There are currently at least 30 active cleanup projects in the Columbia Slough watershed. These projects are in various stages of investigation or cleanup. Investigations will include evaluation of potential contaminant impacts on the Slough as part of the overall risk assessment. Sediment cleanup may be required at sites where evidence links the site to contaminant concentrations detected in sediment.

DEQ has established "baseline concentrations" in the Slough that reflect the pervasive levels of contamination found to be widely present in Slough sediments. The cleanup approach for the Slough requires active clean up of sediment contamination that exceeds these baseline levels. In most cases the baseline concentrations are higher than conservative risk-based screening levels. It is expected that further reduction of contaminant levels in sediment to protective risk-based levels will occur naturally as sources of these contaminants are reduced. Source control actions at individual sites must demonstrate that contaminant releases to the Slough will not exceed risk-based levels.

Examples of site investigations initiated since the last fact sheet update include the Pacific Carbide, Dynea Overlays, and Pacific Meat sites, all of which are located in the Lower Slough. The status of site investigations can be obtained from the DEQ web site.

Long-term monitoring

The City has been monitoring the Slough extensively for over 10 years under a comprehensive monitoring program sampling water, sediment, and fish tissue. The City has nearly completed drafting a long-term monitoring plan for the Slough. This plan formalizes some aspects of long-term monitoring that the City has already been conducting and establishes plans for conducting additional broad-scale sampling events that will aid in evaluating the effectiveness of cleanup actions completed to date. The City is conducting a broad-scale fish tissue sampling effort this summer and plans to conduct a broad sediment sampling event in the Summer of 2006.

Database

Portland has begun placing Columbia Slough sediment and tissue data collected as part of the Screening Level Risk Assessment, Buffalo Slough investigation, and Marx-Whitaker investigation into a database developed by the State of Washington called SedQual. This GIS-based database provides a means to evaluate sediment data spatially, over time, and with respect to various screening levels that have been

developed. DEQ is also placing sediment data collected as part of private party cleanup investigations into this database. Data collected in conjunction with the Army Corps of Engineers 1135 meandering streams project has already been entered.

This database will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the cleanup approach for the Columbia Slough. Evaluation will include looking at the data spatially in the various segments of the Slough to identify remaining areas of elevated contamination where additional source identification efforts or focused cleanup actions are warranted.

Opportunities for public participation

Questions and comments on the Columbia Slough project are welcome and can be directed to DEQ Project Manager, Jennifer Sutter, (503) 229-6148, sutter.jennifer@deq.state.or.us.

Significant documents related to this project are being maintained at information repositories located at the main branch of the Portland Public Library, the Parkrose High School library and DEQ's Northwest Region Office, 2020 SW 4th Ave., 4th floor. To review files at DEQ's office, please contact DEQ's file review coordinator at (503) 229-6729 to make an appointment.

Additional information on this project can be found on DEQ's web site:

<http://www.deq.state.or.us/nwr/cs.htm>.

Information on City watershed protection efforts can be found on the City's web site:

http://www.cleanrivers-pdx.org/clean_rivers/ws_columbia_slough.htm.

Information on the Columbia Slough Watershed Council efforts can be found at

<http://www.columbiaslough.org/>.



Double-crested Cormorant on Johnson Lake