

## DEQ's Role in Portland Harbor Superfund Cleanup



State of Oregon  
Department of  
Environmental  
Quality

Portland Harbor is a heavily industrialized stretch of the Willamette River, extending from Portland's Broadway Bridge to Sauvie Island. Due to decades of industrial activities, riverbed sediment and some adjacent riverbanks are contaminated with pollutants.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency listed Portland Harbor as a Superfund Site in 2000. EPA is designated as the lead agency for investigating and cleaning up contamination in riverbed sediment. DEQ has multiple regulatory roles in Portland Harbor, as described below.

### Source Control Lead

DEQ is the lead agency for overseeing the cleanup of upland properties and upriver areas that may contribute ongoing pollution to Portland Harbor. This is called source control. DEQ works with current and former property owners to control pollutants that present risks to wildlife and people, or that could result in recontaminating sediment after the in-river cleanup occurs. The cleanup and control of upland and upriver pollution is vital to success of the sediment remedy.

### Designated In-Water Support

DEQ is the designated state support agency for EPA's in-water cleanup. This role is defined in the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA), also known as Superfund, and the National Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan, more commonly called the National Contingency Plan or NCP.

CERCLA and the NCP ensure the state's involvement in Superfund cleanups by requiring EPA to work with the state during:

- Settlement negotiations with potentially responsible parties;
- The National Priorities List listing and deleting process;
- Technical studies to determine cleanup options; and
- Selection and implementation of the remedy.

Consistent with this role, DEQ has provided meaningful input throughout the investigation and remedy selection phases of the cleanup.



DEQ concurred with EPA's final cleanup plan, called a Record of Decision, and is working closely with EPA to implement that plan. DEQ's involvement throughout remedy implementation ensures that EPA's in-water remedy meets Oregon's cleanup requirements and that DEQ will support future settlements with liable parties and delisting decisions.

### Sediment Cleanup in the Willamette

DEQ began investigating the Lower Willamette River for contamination in the 1980s and has overseen numerous cleanups:

- DEQ is the lead agency for the McCormick & Baxter Superfund Site and oversaw implementation of the sediment remedy in 2004 and 2005.
- DEQ has overseen multiple sediment investigations and five major sediment cleanup actions in the 4-mile Downtown Reach upriver of Portland Harbor, and a sixth is underway.
- In 2018, DEQ conducted a sediment investigation in the 13-mile Upriver Reach from the Sellwood Bridge to Willamette Falls and found no sources that are likely to recontaminate Portland Harbor.

DEQ will continue to investigate and cleanup potential sources to Portland Harbor as new data become available.

### Alternative formats

Documents can be provided upon request in an alternate format for individuals with disabilities or in a language other than English for people with limited English skills. To request a document in another format or language, call DEQ in Portland at 503-229-5696, or toll-free in Oregon at 1-800-452-4011, ext. 5696; or email [deqinfo@deq.state.or.us](mailto:deqinfo@deq.state.or.us).

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

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