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Status of the Willamette Cove Cleanup – September 2018

DEQ expects to have a cleanup plan for remaining contamination in the upland area by early 2019

DEQ is working with the Port of Portland, Metro and others to complete cleanup of historical contamination at the Willamette Cove property. The property is a former industrial site in North Portland along the bank of the Willamette River’s Portland Harbor Superfund Site.

Contamination is also present in the riverbank and the sediment of the Willamette River. Cleanup of these areas will occur as part of the larger Portland Harbor Superfund cleanup being managed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Potential threats at the property
Threats posed by using Willamette Cove are:
- Direct contact with contaminated soils and beach sand.
- Direct contact with physical hazards, including foundation remnants, rebar, and other debris on the site and offshore underwater.
- Recreational fishers eating “resident fish” they catch. Resident fish are those that live their entire lives in the harbor and do not migrate out to the ocean or other waters. Resident fish include bass, carp and catfish. Migratory fish like salmon, steelhead and lamprey don’t pose this threat. Learn more at http://bit.ly/OHA-Fish

Signs posted at Willamette Cove warn that chemical contaminants remain at the site following the 2015-2016 cleanup. Metro discourages access by keeping the site closed to the public. Oregon Department of State Lands prohibits anchoring at Willamette Cove for more than 30 consecutive nights.

Background
The Willamette Cove property comprises approximately 27 acres and approximately 3,000 feet of Willamette River shoreline. The low-lying riverfront property is on the Willamette River north of downtown Portland and south of the St. Johns Bridge. Portland’s Cathedral Park neighborhood occupies the terrace above Willamette Cove, while the St. Johns neighborhood is located to the north, and University Park neighborhood to the south.

Willamette Cove’s industrial uses date back to the early 1900s, including a lumber mill, plywood mill, barrel manufacturer, and dry-dock

Current status of site cleanup work
The highest levels of contaminated soil were removed from upland areas of the site in 2015-2016. However, chemicals remain in both upland and riverbank soil that pose risk to human health and environment.

Groundwater sampling in 2016-2017 showed the boundaries of contaminated groundwater and provided information for controlling the source of contamination.

Metro and the Port of Portland are developing a revised feasibility study that will present options for cleaning up the remaining contamination on the site and in the groundwater. The feasibility study will be finalized by the end of 2018. These actions will protect the Willamette River from future contamination, and will protect people and animals from exposure to remaining contamination in the upland areas.

DEQ will review the feasibility study and request input from the community before selecting a final cleanup plan. DEQ expects to begin implementing the plan in 2019 or 2020.

Willamette Cove looking upriver.
Circa 1923 with heavy industry.

Fact Sheet
and ship repair facility. Industrial activities ended by the early 1980s and the site has been undeveloped since then. 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, which 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-WillumetteCove](http://bit.ly/OHA-WillumetteCove)

Metro and the Port of Portland entered into a voluntary agreement with DEQ for oversight of the upland investigation and cleanup. In-water work will occur separately under the EPA.

**For more information**

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**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.