Status of the Willamette Cove Cleanup – June 2016

2015 removal action successful, but Property remains contaminated.

The DEQ is working with the Port of Portland, Metro and others to complete cleanup of historical contamination at the Willamette Cove property.

Contamination is also present in Willamette River sediment adjoining the property. At present, plans are for cleanup of sediment (and perhaps riverbank) contamination to occur under EPA oversight following selection of a final remedy for the Portland Harbor Superfund site.

**Potential threats at the property**

Threats posed by using Willamette Cove are:
- Direct contact with contaminated soils and beach sand.
- Direct contact with the numerous physical and safety hazards in the upland and beach, including foundation remnants, rebar, and other debris. Underwater hazards are also present offshore.
- Recreational anglers 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, but not salmon, steelhead and lamprey.

Signs are posted at Willamette Cove stating that chemical contaminants remain at the site following the 2015 cleanup effort. Metro discourages access as the site is 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 3000 feet of Willamette River shoreline. The low-lying river front property is on the Willamette River north of downtown Portland and south of the St. Johns Bridges. Metro purchased the property in 1996 and plans to preserve the land as green space. 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. Industrial activities ended by the late 1960s and the site has been vacant since. Soil contamination is present in the upland site and riverbanks, and in sediment in the adjacent Willamette River. Metro and the Port of Portland entered into a voluntary agreement with DEQ for oversight of investigation and cleanup of property contamination.

The property contained industrial businesses from 1901 to the late 1960s, including a lumber mill, plywood mill, barrel manufacturer, and dry-dock and ship repair facility. These uses left contamination including heavy metals, diesel fuel, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), and chlorinated dibenzo-p-dioxins and chlorinated dibenzofurans (dioxins) which pose a risk to human health and the environment. Partial cleanup actions were completed in the upland and beach in 1999, 2004, 2008, 2015 and 2016. Despite these efforts, significant contamination remains in both soil and the Willamette River which require additional work.

The site is currently closed to the public, and will remain so until cleanup work is completed. Use of the property for recreational purposes such as walking, running, or pet exercise is strongly discouraged by DEQ and Metro. Camping is prohibited by Metro.

For more information please contact:
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