

NEWS RELEASE

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Portland Harbor Fish Consumption Education Moves Forward

Today marked the final step in approval of an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) between the City of Portland, State of Oregon Department of State Lands, Port of Portland and Multnomah County. Portland City Council voted unanimously this morning, approving the IGA already signed by the other three entities. The IGA provides funding to Multnomah County Public Health Department to create a new fish consumption advisory outreach program for Portland Harbor.

"As we continue to work toward cleanup of the Portland Harbor, community outreach and education will be an integral part of the revitalization of the waterfront," Governor Kate Brown said. "Fish are an important source of food and a vital part of a healthy ecosystem, and the progress we're making to return fishing in the Portland Harbor as a healthy and viable option is encouraging."

The agreement provides \$345,000 paid by the City, State and Port, over two years to Multnomah County; resources that will be used to hire a full-time health educator dedicated to the program, develop outreach materials, as well as offer grants to community partners.

"We are worried about people who may eat the fish they catch in the river during the Portland Harbor cleanup. These funds will help us educate community members about the risks and make sure people are safe. We look forward to working with our community partners on this project," said Jae Douglas, Director of Environmental Health Services at Multnomah County.

The fish advisory for Portland Harbor is issued by Oregon Health Authority, based in part on data from risk assessments done by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for the Portland Harbor Superfund site. The overlay of a Superfund site on the top of the usual OHA fish advisory process can understandably cause public confusion. The intent in providing funding to the local public health agency is to improve public understanding about fish consumption.

"We recognize that the existing fish advisories are not sufficient to inform Portlanders about the risks of eating fish from the Willamette. Today's vote by City Council puts us on a path to do better particularly for our most vulnerable residents who rely on fish from the Willamette for food or heritage," said Commissioner Nick Fish.

“By collaborating with our partners at the city and state, we can better spread the word to keep families safe,” said Curtis Robinhold, Port of Portland executive director. “Along the way, we’ll continue to keep our Portland Harbor work moving forward.”

Fish advisories are part of the remedy laid out by EPA in its January 2017 Record of Decision for Portland Harbor. EPA will ultimately establish a long-term program for the site. The City, State and Port are taking this step now to improve public understanding of the risks as soon as possible.

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