



Facts about the Portland Harbor Superfund site

The Port of Portland is committed to a cleanup of the Portland Harbor Superfund site that protects the health of Portlanders and the environment, and to finding the most cost-effective way to achieve it.

Background

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) listed the Lower Willamette River as a Superfund site in 2000. The affected area encompasses approximately 10 miles of the Willamette River in Portland, from the Broadway Bridge north to near the confluence of the Willamette and Columbia rivers. Contamination of this site came from more than 100 years of regional development (urban, industrial and agricultural), ship building and ship scrapping (dating from World War I and World War II to the Korean War), as well as combined sewer overflows and stormwater discharges.

The Port, along with the City of Portland and more than 10 businesses, has been actively engaged in working with EPA to study the river and the best ways to address the contamination in the river.

The study has determined:

- Sediment areas near the shoreline have more contamination than sediment in the middle of the river and some areas need more immediate attention than others. Chemical concentrations are generally lower in the surface sediment and higher in the deeper levels. Surface sediment has improved over time as sources have been cleaned up and cleaner material has moved in as a natural part of river sediment shifts.
- Four main chemicals pose the most risk—PCB's, PAHs, dioxins/furans and pesticides. The greatest risk in the river is for those who eat the fish that live there, like bass and carp. Salmon and other migratory fish like sturgeon do not pose a threat to humans. The Oregon Health Authority has determined that the Portland Harbor Superfund site is safe for recreational uses like swimming, boating and walking along any of the beaches currently open to the public.

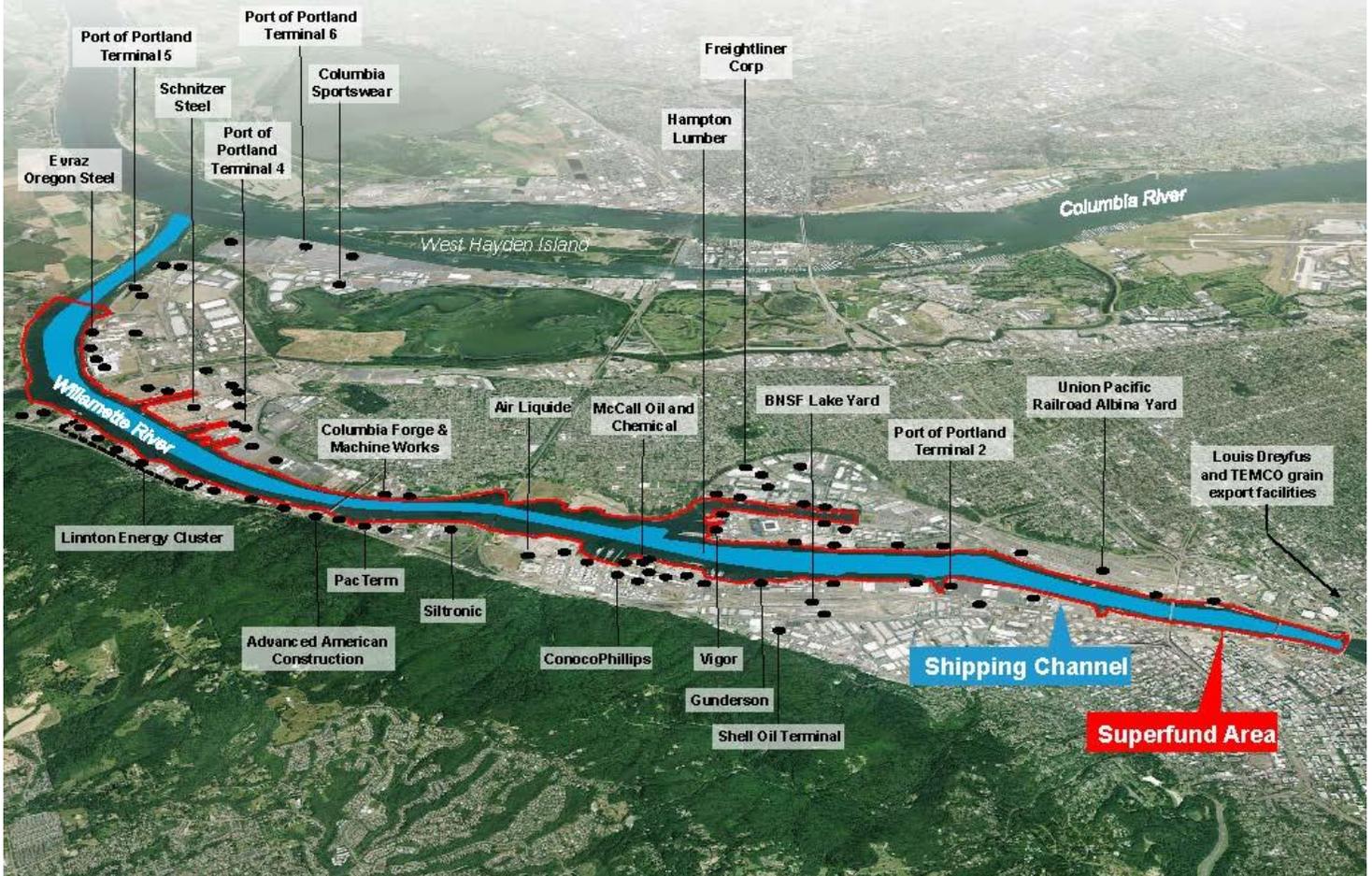
Some cleanup at 14 locations in and around the river has already occurred, including at the Port's Terminal 4. The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality has also overseen numerous projects along the river (including at several Port sites), helping to ensure contamination doesn't continue to flow into the river.

What's happening now?

The EPA will soon issue its Proposed Plan for the cleanup at Portland Harbor. A 60-day public comment period responding to the Plan is expected in summer 2016. The EPA has said it hopes to issue its final decision on Portland Harbor, known as the Record of Decision, by the end of this year.

The Plan will be one alternative selected from a range of cleanup options analyzed in the EPA's feasibility study for the site. All of the alternatives put forth by the EPA in its feasibility study reduce contamination over time to levels that are protective of human health and the environment. The key differences among the alternatives are cost, due to the reliance on more or less dredging or active cleanup, as compared to monitored natural recovery; the short-term impacts to the environment, and the length of time to implement the remedy. Spending more money does not guarantee greater risk reduction.

Portland's Working Waterfront



Why this matters to Oregonians

The cost to cleanup Portland Harbor is significant, at a time when the city and region are facing many critical issues. The bill for cleanup could well exceed \$1 billion.

The Superfund law requires that the total cost of cleanup be paid by parties responsible for the historic pollution, and those connected with the areas where it occurred. The costs are allocated by liability, not equally among parties. There are likely 150 parties who have been involved with the site historically and currently who are potentially responsible for the contamination and for cleaning it up. These include governments, local companies and utilities, as well as larger multinational businesses. While a portion of costs could be borne by out-of-state companies, the majority of the Portland Harbor cleanup will be paid for by local employers, taxpayers and utility customers for many years to come. Given the issues facing the community now, the Port will work to ensure that the Portland Harbor cleanup gets done effectively and responsibly and in a way that does not burden future generations.

For more information on Portland Harbor Superfund, please contact:

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