

The Willamette River Insider

October 2015, Issue 2



Welcome to the second edition of *The Willamette River Insider*, a bi-monthly publication by the Portland Harbor Community Advisory Group. We are volunteers providing oversight of the lower Willamette River superfund cleanup, the 11 miles from the Fremont Bridge to the confluence with the Columbia River, adjacent to north, northeast and northwest Portland. See PortlandHarborCAG.info for more.

Citizens' Press Conference Presents Community Plan for the Clean Up

Community Press Conference • Monday, October 19, 11am • Cathedral Park turnaround (N. Pittsburg)

Representatives of Portland Harbor Community Advisory Group, Willamette Riverkeeper, Audubon Portland, and other groups will host a press conference on the banks of the Willamette River on Oct. 19 to present the citizens' plan for the superfund clean up that will be turned in to the EPA's National Remedy Review Board the same day. All interested individuals who would like to see an effective and safe clean up that benefits adjacent communities are encouraged to join in.

The Community Plan for the Superfund

Citizen advisers and community partners maintain that getting the clean up right is more important than getting it done fast or cheap. There needs to be long-term effectiveness since recontamination of cancer-causing, and endocrine-disrupting chemicals serves no one. All users of the river have a right to safety and health.

Community members agree with EPA that the use of monitored natural recovery (MNR) should be limited. The river scours regularly in spring, making the burial of contaminants unreliable. The Willamette is subject to floods and there are fault lines on either side that could prove to be disastrous in an earthquake. Relying on clean sediment from upriver to cover up contaminants is a temporary fix and likely to result in later recontamination.

Many of the chemicals of concern do not break down by natural means, or they break down at such a slow rate, that unacceptable damage to the ecosystem will continue to accrue if left in the river. Heavy metals in the river's sediment such as mercury, lead, asbestos, and persistent pollutants PCBs, DDTs, Dioxins and Furans will continue to harm river life that comes in contact with them. Some metals and persistent chemicals have been in the river bottom for 50 to 100 years or more. The only way to reliably reduce their damage is through removal. Otherwise the food chain will continue to carry contaminants from the small creatures in the sediment that serve as the basis of life, up to fish, then to birds, mammals and humans.

The river is held in trust for citizens, from headwaters to confluence. This is our one chance to make a difference in the lower Willamette River. We need to do the clean up right the first time.

Community Stories

JR Lilly of the Native American Youth and Family Center (NAYA) has been involved in the superfund through Portland Harbor Community Coalition. He was interviewed for the video "People's View of the Harbor."

We in the Portland native community have always been here. We've had our villages here and we always had the river as a highway to connect the villages from one tribe to another.

It was, as well, a source of economy and trade. The river is also a very spiritual element that provides life to all of us: the fish that come out of it, the nutrients even the seaweed all are elements that we find respectful in our ceremonies. It teaches young people patience, when fishing. The way it continually flows teaches us to never give up on things. Also the river is a lifeline for us. The river is the veins that run through mother earth and we need to keep her healthy.

Native people, nonnative people, all of us together need to take part in this. A lot of the businesses, the potentially responsible parties they have to play their role. But we as residents, we as taxpayers and voters, we have to make our voices heard. Our native community especially welcomes allies, people who share the same values we do, the value of harmony, the value of connecting to nature, to people, not just the bottom line of profit. We are all about standing together with everyone.



JR Lilly of NAYA

Why Should We Care? by Jackie Calder

In 2000 the lower Willamette was listed as a superfund site which is defined as the federal government's program to clean up the worst uncontrolled and abandoned toxic waste sites nationwide.



Jackie Calder, PHCAG

The main hazardous substances of concern are: polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), dioxins, furans, DDT, and heavy metals such as cadmium, lead, zinc, and arsenic. These contaminants present a risk to river life, wildlife and humans. Exposure can cause a range of health issues including reproductive problems, birth defects, immune system suppression, endocrine interruption, and cancer.

The most serious exposure pathway to humans is through the food chain from eating resident fish particularly for nursing mothers. There can also be slight exposure through breathing chemicals that have evaporated into the air or attached to particles of dust or through direct contact with river sediments.

In order to make the river healthy, it is essential for these chemicals to be removed by dredging. Any clean up methods that leave them in the river could lead to recontamination and have to be readdressed later. We hope the community will support citizen advisors in asking for the clean up to be done right the first time. With so much emphasis placed on cost to polluters, we need the community to offer feedback to EPA, state and city leaders, in order to achieve an effective, and safe clean up for everyone.

Who are the Citizen Advisors?

Portland Harbor Community Advisory Group (PHCAG) members are volunteer citizens representing the community in the Willamette River superfund process that started in 2000.

Current chair and north Portlander, Jim Robison, became a member in 2001 and was elected chair in 2011. Vice chair,

communications lead, and University Park representative, Jackie Calder, also started in 2001. Robin Plance, who served as chair for 10 years started in 2001 as well, and represents St. Johns Neighborhood Association. Darise Weller, a 10-year member is treasurer and represents Linnton Neighborhood Association. Barbara Quinn, secretary and member at large, was elected officially 2012 but attended meetings for several years prior as Cathedral Park Neighborhood Association chair. Bill Egan, also a member at large, started in 2005 and probably has more experience on the river as a lifelong fisherman and than most. Doug Larson is a new member and current chair of Cathedral Park Neighborhood Association. Bob Sallinger of Portland Audubon represents environmental interests and was officially elected to the PHCAG recently, though he's been involved in the process for years.

The PHCAG is seeking additional members. Are you interested in a healthier Willamette River and watershed? Call or email Jackie Calder: 503-799-7855 or cleanriveroregon4@yahoo.com.

October / November Calendar

Oct. 14, Weds., 6-8pm - Monthly meeting Portland Harbor Community Advisory Group at the BES Water Lab, 6543 N. Burlington. All are welcome.

Oct. 19, Tuesday, 11am - Community press conference at Cathedral Park turnaround (on N. Pittsburg). PHCAG presents community plan due to the National Remedy Review Board the same day.

Oct. 28, Weds., 6:30pm - Steering meeting Portland Harbor Community Advisory at the BES Water Lab 6543 N. Burlington. Open to all.

Nov. 11, Weds., 6-8pm - Monthly meeting Portland Harbor Community Advisory Group at the BES Water Lab, 6543 N. Burlington. All are welcome.

Nov. 18, 19 - EPA National Remedy Review Board meets in Portland to review the recommended clean up methods and advise EPA Region 10. Only tribes and EPA are allowed to testify.

Nov. 25, Weds., 6:30pm - Steering meeting Portland Harbor Community Advisory at the BES Water Lab 6543 N. Burlington. Open to all.

Superfund Timeline Update:

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| <i>Oct. 19 2015</i> | <i>Nov. 18, 19 2015</i> | <i>Spring 2016</i> | <i>Late 2016</i> | <i>Late 2016 or 2017</i> |
| <i>Written comments from PHCAG due to the EPA's Nat'l Remedy Review Board.</i> | <i>Nat'l Remedy Review Board in Portland to review the Conceptual Remedy. Live testimony from tribes, ODEQ and EPA only.</i> | <i>EPA presents the Proposed Plan Followed by 60 days of formal public comment</i> | <i>Anticipated date of the Record of Decision that will describe remedy selection</i> | <i>Remedial Design phase a more detailed plan public notification</i> |