



Fact Sheet

Columbia Slough Sediment Cleanup: Settlement Agreement with City of Portland

Background

The Columbia Slough is an approximate 31-mile waterway extending from Fairview Lake, near the City of Fairview, to Kelly Point Park in Portland, near the confluence of the Willamette and Columbia Rivers. Sediment in the Columbia Slough is contaminated with a variety of hazardous substances such as polychlorinated biphenyls, pesticides and metals. Industrial, commercial and agricultural facilities located along the Columbia Slough may have contributed to sediment contamination through wastewater discharge, stormwater runoff, bank erosion and groundwater discharge.

In 2005, the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality issued a final cleanup approach, called a Record of Decision, for the Columbia Slough that provides the framework for cleaning up contaminated sediment. The primary components of this framework are:

- Reducing upland sources of pollution.
- Cleaning up individual sediment sites.
- Long-term monitoring.

Since DEQ issued the cleanup plan in 2005, DEQ and the City of Portland have been working together to improve Columbia Slough sediment quality. The cleanup plan includes:

- Cleaning up slough sediments at individual sites,
- Minimize further contamination releases to the Columbia Slough,
- Monitoring conditions over the long term to ensure continued and lasting improvement and
- Alternative remedial measures that benefit overall watershed health.

In 2008, DEQ provided an alternative option for potentially responsible parties to settle their potential liability for Columbia Slough sediment contamination. In April 2024, DEQ and the City of Portland Bureau of Environmental Services came to a settlement agreement to address stormwater and sediment contamination in the Columbia Slough.

Public benefits of the agreement

The settlement between DEQ and the City of Portland will accelerate progress toward Columbia Slough cleanup and more effectively bring the community into the cleanup process in addition to the following:

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- Prioritize watershed health improvements to benefit communities most affected by historic contamination.
- Increase capacity to prevent and control sources of pollution.
- Increase and improve public health risk communication.
- Utilize local community resources to help tackle Environmental Justice issues, particularly in prioritizing cleanup projects for in-water sediment.
- Targeted projects to provide lasting enhancement to watershed health.

Agreement highlights

Under the agreement the City of Portland will perform the following activities:

- Pay DEQ \$18 million over a period of 3-years:
 - \$16 million allocated to an in-water sediment cleanup fund that DEQ manages; and
 - \$2 million allocated for joint cleanup and habitat improvements.
- Pay DEQ \$1.5 million to conduct upland pollution source control evaluations using DEQ staff or contractors.
- Perform \$4 million of alternative cleanup measure projects that benefit watershed health, with project selection criteria that incorporates Environmental Justice.

Perform one comprehensive, slough-wide fish tissue and sediment sampling event between 2025 and 2026.

- Evaluate all 209 City of Portland stormwater basins that discharge to the Columbia Slough and treat stormwater in 15 priority outfall basins within the next 15 years.
- Continue to pay DEQ oversight costs until work is completed for all outfall basins, which may extend up to 15 years.

DEQ will finalize the City's work through a certificate of completion for each activity or priority area. Once DEQ issues certificates of completion for all required items, the City of Portland will receive a release of liability for its potential contribution to historical releases of hazardous substances and associated natural resource damages.

Program name and contacts

If you are interested in learning more about the settlement with the City or are interested in pursuing a settlement for a site with sediment contamination in the Columbia Slough, please visit DEQ's website to view the [Columbia Slough project page](#) or scanning the QR code at the bottom of the page. You can also contact DEQ's Project Manager for the Columbia Slough, Sarah Miller, at 503-863-0561 or sarah.miller@deq.oregon.gov.

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