



Our river is our lifeline, our future.
Portland Harbor Community Coalition
Willamette River

The Portland Harbor Community Coalition

The Portland Harbor Community Coalition (PHCC) is an alliance of those most directly impacted by pollution in the Portland Harbor Superfund Site. Native American, communities of color, immigrant and refugee groups, houseless, conservation, and faith-based organizations have joined in partnership, supported by education institutions, individuals, and other groups concerned about social and environmental justice. PHCC works to raise the voices of everyone, especially those most impacted by contamination in the Portland Harbor. PHCC's objective is to ensure that those who have suffered historically and those who currently suffer will benefit from the cleanup process, rather than continue to be harmed.

Why YOUR Voice Matters

Left untreated, contaminants in the Willamette River will continue to threaten Portland area residents, our environment, and communities downriver. The clean-up is projected to cost up to \$3 billion, making a huge contribution to the local economy with hundreds of cleanup-related jobs and decades of work. The potentially responsible parties include Fortune 500 companies who are misinforming the public, and pressuring local and federal decision-makers to minimize costs of the clean-up.

Only your participation in the public comment period can ensure an effective clean-up that benefits us all, and especially groups most impacted. We must

create a visible groundswell - a movement of all of us working in coalition to ensure that the most dangerous pollution is removed from the river.

Impacted Communities

Several underrepresented groups have been disproportionately impacted by contamination in the Portland Harbor, and it will take drastic, coalition-wide measures to ensure that these groups benefit from cleanup and redevelopment. Impacted groups include:

- First Nations/Native Americans: Six federally recognized tribes have treaty rights to the Portland Harbor. Northwest Native peoples have inhabited lands along the Willamette River since time immemorial, living in harmony with the natural environment - the fish, water, and land. Native people were able to sustain their villages and trade with other tribes in large part due to the salmon, lamprey/eel, and other species that traveled in abundance through the river. The river and fish are considered sacred relatives, and are respected for their contributions to the cycle of life.
- African Americans: Black Portlanders have historically been one of the most impacted groups by Harbor activity. African Americans first arrived in Portland in large numbers to work in the shipyards. Many fished in the Harbor, eating contaminated fish. African American shipyard workers were also exposed to toxic substances such as lead and asbestos in the shipyards, and toxic air in nearby neighborhoods, and were prohibited from joining the unions. At the same time, workers and their families were forced to live in segregated neighborhoods for decades, and have since suffered (and continue to suffer) from the impacts of serial displacement as the city has grown and changed.
- Immigrants and Refugees: Many people, especially Eastern European, Asian, and Latin American immigrants and refugees subsist on resident fish from the Portland Harbor and are exposed to health risks from contaminants in the fish. Families often depend on the fish for protein, and view fishing as a continuation of a cultural tradition. Many people lack

information about the dangers of consuming fish from the Portland Harbor, while others are aware of risks but are food insecure and lack alternatives.

- People Experiencing or at Risk of Homelessness: Hundreds of houseless people are forced to live on the banks of the Portland Harbor in the wake of a housing crisis that has left many without permanent and affordable shelter and with regular sweeps of homeless camps in inner Portland neighborhoods. People living along the river are exposed to toxins such as lead, PCBs and dioxins in the soil. They are also at risk of being displaced again as cleanup begins, without quality housing alternatives. People of color are disproportionately represented among the houseless population. Moreover, as the waterfront is cleaned up and redevelopment begins, residents with low and moderate incomes are at risk of being displaced from adjacent neighborhoods or excluded from living near the river without substantial anti-displacement provisions (e.g. community benefits agreements, affordable housing construction, etc.).

PHCC Recommendations

PHCC makes the following recommendations to ensure a just cleanup of the Portland Harbor Superfund Site. We encourage PHCC supporters to reference these in testimony submitted to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) during the official public comment period beginning in May 2016:

1. **Economic Justice**: Ensure that the most impacted communities are not burdened by the cost of cleanup, meaning that polluters pay.
2. **Healthy Fish**: Ensure that fish are safe for EVERYONE to eat.
3. **Community Fund**: Establish a fund to assist communities impacted by historical and ongoing contamination and cleanup until health standards are met.
4. **Jobs & Job Training**: Train and hire local residents in Superfund Cleanup; prioritize most impacted communities, and pay a living, family wage.

5. **Housing:** Give 90-days notice before beginning cleanup in areas where houseless people are living; provide funds for permanent, affordable housing for anyone - houseless or housed - displaced by the cleanup.
6. **Community Benefits Agreements (CBAs):** Support CBAs between Portland Harbor polluters responsible for cleanup and impacted community groups to ensure provisions around jobs, housing, public access, etc.
7. **Cleanup:** Remove all highly and moderately contaminated sediments from the river; Promote and use the most effective, innovative technologies and cleanup methods that Portland can be proud of, regardless of cost.
8. **Community Involvement:** Partner with impacted communities – including youth – on habitat restoration and monitoring of toxins.
9. **Source Control:** Include ongoing pollution controls of upriver sources and existing Portland Harbor industrial sites in the final cleanup plan.
10. **Climate & Air:** Require air monitoring and an action plan to limit air contaminants during sediment dredging; Require the most effective fuel/emissions filters available throughout the entire cleanup process.
11. **Health:** Transport and dispose of contaminated sediment in a way that does not further harm people and the environment.
12. **Public Access:** Maintain and increase access to public lands on the river and nearby; include impacted communities in the design and development of new public access sites.

Background Information

What is the Portland Harbor Superfund Site?

The Portland Harbor Superfund Site is an 11-mile stretch of the Willamette River, from the Broadway Bridge to the Columbia River. Over a century of industrial pollution has left toxic substances –including heavy metals, PCBs, dioxin, and pesticides – in the soil and sediment in the river and on its banks. Fish that live year-round in the Portland Harbor – such as bass, carp, and catfish – pose a health risk to those who eat them because of these toxins. It will take at least 20-30 years to clean up the river.

How does the cleanup process work?

Those that polluted the river are called “potentially responsible parties” (PRPs). The EPA mandates that PRPs pay for the river’s cleanup. For over 16 years, the PRPs conducted studies that failed to capture the true health and environmental risks and set a low standard for cleanup. EPA will determine the final cleanup plan and assign responsibility amongst over 100 responsible parties. Public pressure will be the only way to increase the standards.

What is the public comment process like?

In May 2016, the EPA will release the proposed cleanup alternative plans for public review and comment. The public will have at least 60 days (May and June) to review the plans and provide formal comments. The EPA is required to review and respond to all public comments, and consider them in the final Record of Decision (ROD).

For more information, consult the following:

- **Portland Harbor Community Coalition** - www.ourfuturriver.org
- **Portland Harbor Community Advisory Group** - www.portlandharborcag.info/
- **How to submit written public testimony** - www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2014-04/documents/making-your-voice-heard.pdf