

The EPA's Superfund Cleanup Process at Portland Harbor

March 2017

Cleaning up Superfund sites is a complex, multi-phased process. The steps outlined below represent past project milestones for the Portland Harbor Superfund Site as well as current and future phases of the project. Timelines for current and future phases are estimates and are dependent on various factors such as the willingness of potentially responsible parties to fund and perform the work.

Preliminary Assessment/Site Investigation (Site Assessment)

Before Portland Harbor was considered a Superfund Site, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) reviewed historical information and evaluated the site for potential releases of hazardous substances. We determined that the site posed a threat to people and the environment, and that additional site information should be collected.

National Priorities List (Site Listing Process) – 2000

In 2000, the EPA placed the site on the Superfund Program's National Priorities List (NPL). The NPL is the list of the worst hazardous waste sites identified by the Superfund Program.

Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study (Site Characterization) 2001 – 2016

During this phase the EPA evaluated the nature and extent of contamination at the site and assessed actual and potential threats to human health and the environment. This stage of the process also included evaluating the potential performance and cost of treatment options identified for the site.

The EPA also worked with communities to learn how they used the site, how the pollution at the site affected them, how they wanted the EPA to provide them with information about our work, and provide opportunities for meaningful engagement on the decisions.

Proposed Plan – Summer 2016

Leading up to the issuance of the final cleanup plan (also called the Record of Decision or ROD), the EPA recommended a preferred remedy and presented that cleanup plan in a document, called the Proposed Plan, for public comment. The comment period ran from June 9 through September 6, 2016.

Record of Decision (Final Remedy Decision) – January 2017

In January, following the public comment period, we issued the final Record of Decision. The ROD explains the final cleanup remedy that will be used at Portland Harbor. We plan to present details of the final remedy at community information sessions and continue work to involve the community.

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Site-Wide Baseline Sampling – Estimate of 1-2 Years

The EPA is conducting preliminary planning to determine what site-wide baseline sampling will be conducted. We need current data to get a snapshot of sediment contamination. This will help inform where future design work and related design sampling should occur. We continue to work with and involve communities during this phase.

Remedial Design – Estimate of 2-3 Years

Next, detailed design plans for the remedial action work will be developed and implemented. Remedial design will include additional sampling, development of engineering drawings, and specifications for site cleanup. This phase could overlap with the previous baseline sampling phase. We continue to work with and involve communities during this phase.

Remedial Action – 13 Years

Remedial action follows design, and involves the actual construction or implementation phase of site cleanup. This phase is expected to take about 13 years, as outlined in the ROD.

In addition, we continue to work with communities to make sure their needs are understood and that the work is done with minimum disruption to daily life and the economy.

Operation and Maintenance and Long-term Monitoring

This phase helps to ensure that the cleanup work at the site continues to protect human health and the environment and is triggered once construction (or remedial action) begins. This phase includes routine monitoring of all constructed remedies, monitoring to evaluate natural recovery, and Five-Year Reviews of the site to ensure cleanup continues to be effective. We continue to work with and involve communities during this phase, as appropriate.

Site Reuse/Redevelopment

The EPA's goal is to make sure the cleanup is consistent with the likely future use of the site. Consideration of reuse at Portland Harbor is ongoing throughout the Superfund cleanup process. We continue to work with and involve communities during this phase, as appropriate.

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