

R River Care and Repair

~ SUPERFUND continued from page 1.

WRK feels that this is an option that could be explored, if adequate data was provided. To date there have been many questions regarding such a site in relation to potential flooding and long term movement of groundwater. While these facilities have been used in Puget Sound for years, this would be the first time in the Western United States that such a facility would be constructed in a riverine environment.

Based on the information provided by the EPA to date, it is still too risky with too many unanswered questions, to approve of at this time.



Early Action at GASCO

The site known as Gasco, owned by NW Natural, was recently cleaned up. A mass of tar, near the river's shoreline, was extracted over a period of weeks. The area was then capped with clean sediment. This tar-like substance was on the river bottom for the past few decades, creating a contaminated hotspot in the middle of an already polluted Harbor.

Due to the strong advocacy of WRK, NW Natural decided to follow through on earlier commitments to



clean this area. While this cleanup is part of the overall Superfund cleanup, it is known as an "Early Action" and can be cleaned up earlier than other areas in the Harbor due to the amount of information already obtained by the EPA and NW Natural.

While there was not a containment wall put around this mess during removal, there was a "silt curtain" placed to prevent contamination of the river as the area was being cleaned up. During the cleanup, on several occasions, water quality samples showed very high amounts of Benzo(a) pyrene and Benzo(a) anthracene. In our view, this contamination occurred far too often.

Several times work stopped at the site until the EPA, working with NW Natural, could decide what, if any, corrective action should be taken to address the high contaminant levels downstream.

The removal was far from perfect. The result though, has gotten the vast majority of the area cleaned up. This project has provided some valuable lessons for the EPA that can be applied to future actions in the Portland Harbor cleanup that are of a similar nature.

Far left: Tar from the Gasco site is removed one scoop at a time.

Left: McCormick & Baxter shoreline is now reinforced with a blanket of concrete.

McCormick and Baxter

Over the past few months, the McCormick & Baxter site in the Portland Harbor has been undergoing the final stages of cleanup. This site is the former home to McCormick & Baxter, a company that treated wood with creosote. Over the years, due to poor disposal and holding practices, creosote leaked into the groundwater in this area. This site was listed as a Superfund site in June 1994, preceding the larger Superfund site by several years.

The cleanup has been significant, with 33,000 tons of contaminated soil removed from the site. Part of the pollution problem at this site included significant contamination of river sediment.

This past summer a cap was placed over the in-water portion of contaminated sediment. This cap is reinforced along the shoreline with a concrete blanket intended to protect against erosion. The upland area has been capped as well, and then covered with a specialized sheet that provides another layer of protection, and then more soil. The goal is a cleanup that results in a usable area that can be used again with no acute or chronic impacts on human health.

McCormick & Baxter also provides some good restoration opportunity. Willamette Riverkeeper will be working with DEQ in the months ahead on planting native species on site. This site will also require many years of monitoring to ensure that all aspects of the cleanup are working as designed. Stay tuned for more information on McCormick and Baxter.

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Willamette Greenway Strategy Completed

In the past month, Oregon State Parks issued its Willamette Greenway Parklands Strategy. Willamette Riverkeeper was on the Advisory Group guiding this effort.

The main thrust of the Strategy is providing resources for existing parks parcels along the river, improving some sites for use with the Willamette Water Trail (such as fire rings, picnic tables, etc.), and for new Greenway acquisitions. Willamette Riverkeeper helped push this effort and is excited about the Strategy and helping Oregon State Parks reach some of the goals included in the new effort.

The Strategy also recognizes the need for OPRD and others to help support the planning side of the Greenway Program found in Goal 15. In addition to Greenway Parks along the river, the Greenway Program provides some measure of protection from development along the river through County and City Planning, as directed by Goal 15.

Willamette Riverkeeper believes that the new Strategy will help protect existing habitat, and acquire new habitat over time that is beneficial to the river. In addition, the Greenway Program will continue to provide opportunities for people to experience and enjoy the river, via canoe and kayak, hiking trails, and other access opportunities. The Willamette River is already distinguished by the many OPRD properties along its length, and in the coming years we have a great opportunity to make the program even better. To read the Strategy from the Parks website, visit: <http://egov.oregon.gov/OPRD/PLANS/docs/Greenwaystrategy10-05.pdf>.



Scenes on an island near McCartney Park, a Willamette Greenway parcel north of Eugene.


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Willamette Riverkeeper has an improved tool in our communications toolbox. As a member of Earth Share of Oregon, we are able to provide valuable information about our programs to a broader audience with a convenient click on www.earthshare-oregon.org.

Earth Share of Oregon's (ESOR's) new and improved website offers useful information for a variety of visitors. If you are a donor to Willamette Riverkeeper and/or other

environmental groups, you'll want to see more about how we and other members of ESOR invest your contributions. If you want to get outdoors or attend an event, you can visit the site to see upcoming activities and events happening in the environmental community. Is it about time to volunteer? ESOR includes volunteer opportunities with their 35 member groups all over the State of Oregon. Get up-to-date news about environmental issues, subscribe to ESOR's electronic newsletter or just peruse the list of conservation groups and see all of the amazing work they are doing to keep people healthy, preserve wildlife habitat and reduce global warming.

Visit www.earthshare-oregon.org.

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What's Happening with Ross Island?

Over the past few years, a lot of work by Willamette Riverkeeper and others, such as Portland Audubon, has gone in to cleaning up Ross Island and developing and implementing the restoration plan for the Island. Willamette Riverkeeper has felt that Ross Island will someday make an excellent public resource.

Three years ago Ross Island Sand and Gravel indicated verbally to Mayor Vera Katz, and to the media that they wish to donate the island to the City. Because of existing issues with contaminated sediment that was taken from the Port of Portland several years ago, and an accidental spreading of the disposed sediment by a Ross Island employee, the City has been slow to finalize the offer.

Willamette Riverkeeper has been advocating with the City of Portland to get the agreement on paper and finalized. After all, it is not every day that someone offers you an island. WRK believes that ultimately Ross Island should be a wildlife refuge and a low impact paddling area administered by Portland Parks and Recreation. While the rock crushing operation will continue on Hardtack Island for an indefinite period, Ross and East islands present an excellent opportunity to create a wonderful riverland resource that can be enjoyed by

Great Blue Heron, Osprey, River Otter and generations of Portlanders.

The site will be undergoing a separate restoration/mitigation project that was required of Ross Island for the privilege of extracting gravel from waters of the State for the past several decades. Today they are bringing in clean sediment to build up parts of the lagoon's base (at present some 100 feet deep) to support shallow water habitat and related riparian restoration work. The restoration component is scheduled to go on for another eight and a half years. When it is complete, the lagoon will provide excellent habitat for native fish and wildlife.

This effort also goes hand-in-hand with establishing a No Wake Zone in the Holgate Channel and within the Ross Island Lagoon. Willamette Riverkeeper, and other partners, plan to present this concept to the Oregon State Marine Board next spring.

WRK, along with Portland Audubon and the Urban Greenspaces Institute with Mike Houck, are leading the charge with this project in an effort to finalize this deal. Stay tuned for opportunities to weigh in on the subject during the months ahead.



PORTLAND PADDLE participants enjoy a stop on the northern tip of Ross Island.



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