

**McCormick & Baxter Superfund Site Tree Planting**  
**February 11, 2006 – 11:45-1:00pm**  
**Remarks**

**WHAT:**

A tree planting event to honor the significant progress made in cleaning up this once highly toxic site; over 10,000 native trees and shrubs will be planted

**Agenda:**

- 11:00 am Volunteers arrive and tree planting begins
- 12:00 pm Speaker presentations begin.
- 12:30 pm Presentations end. Speakers join volunteers in planting trees

**Speakers:**

Stephanie Hallock, DEQ Director will moderate

1. Travis Williams, Willamette Riverkeeper, and PDX Harbor Advisory member
2. Governor Ted Kulongoski
3. Michael Bogert, EPA Region 10 Administrator
- 4. City of Portland Commissioner Sam**
5. Cheryl Kennedy, Council Chairwoman, Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde
6. Stephanie Hallock, DEQ Director

## **Site Background**

- ✓ McCormick & Baxter Creosoting Company began in the 1940s to produce a variety of chemically treated wood products, such as utility poles, using creosote, arsenic, pentachlorophenol and other hazardous substances
- ✓ Historic dumping and leaking of chemical wastes resulted in high levels of toxic contamination in soils, groundwater and river sediments
- ✓ In 1990, DEQ identified the site as a high priority for cleanup
- ✓ In 1994, EPA listed the site as a Superfund Site
- ✓ About \$45 million has been invested in clean up
- ✓ DEQ led cleanup for past 15 years, in partnership with EPA, Tribes, NOAA, FWS, City and others.
- ✓ Cleanup has included removal of 33,000 tons of contaminated soils and debris
- ✓ Construction of an underground barrier wall (up to 80 feet deep) to stop creosote and contaminated groundwater from moving into the river
- ✓ Construction of a 23-acre sediment cap and a six-acre soil cap along the riverbank
- ✓ Construction of a 35-acre impermeable cap and earthen soil cap
- ✓ DEQ is now conducting extensive testing

## Remarks

Good morning and welcome. Before 1994, this was a bog of buried inertia; bleeding toxic poisons into the Willamette River. Today it is a site of opportunity; a place to reconnect Portland to the River. Putting this site into productive use is an environmental priority for the City, State, and Nation.

If you saw this site 10 years ago it would have been difficult to envision being able to plant 10,000 trees and shrubs here today. This event is the culmination of the Oregon DEQ, the US EPA, the Grande Ronde Tribe, Willamette Riverkeepers, the City of Portland and a cast of others who came together to help restore the river. All those involved deserve congratulations and appreciation for their efforts.

While this milestone is an incredible success at this site, we know that there is much more work to do to restore the health of Willamette River. Resources are limited and there are many competing priorities. Our work on this larger effort must be efficient, build productive and lasting relationships, and remove barriers to progress.

Everything we do on the land within the watershed affects the rivers and streams in some way. Healthy watersheds are vital for a healthy environment and economy. Our watersheds provide water for drinking, irrigation, recreation and industry. Fish and wildlife also need healthy watersheds for food and shelter.

Since it's all interconnected, impacts to any part of the watershed affect the other parts as well. That's why cleaning up the Willamette includes finding better ways to deal with the rain that falls far from the river as well as cleaning up the river's banks and its sediments.

The City's River Renaissance vision of a Clean and Healthy River, a key component of the broad strategy where economic development, natural resource enhancement, and recreation fit together as the center of a vibrant city sets the direction for the city's priorities and actions.

The City's work that will get us to a Clean and Healthy River, includes:

- ✓ Implementing the Portland Watershed Management Plan - moving Portland toward a more sustainable urban environment, providing opportunities for several city bureaus to help address watershed health goals in the context of regular City business such as road construction and maintenance, land use planning and economic development.
- ✓ Cross-bureau approaches to developing "green streets";
- ✓ Working closely with DEQ on assessing the City's potential contribution of upland sources to the Portland Harbor sediment contamination.

The Portland Harbor was listed as a Superfund site in 2000, and the City, the Port and several other parties with operations along the River are participating in, and financing, an extensive and expensive sediment investigation. Our success in improving the health of the Willamette River depends on collaboration in that assessment work—and in the subsequent cleanup activities. No single effort can clean up a Superfund site, improve natural habitat or restore watershed health.

The City looks forward to meeting these challenges, and working with our Federal, state, local partners, Tribal governments, and community members in cleaning up the Willamette. With your help and the City's Revegetation Program, we will plant over 10,000 native trees and shrubs. Today's event is testimony to collaborative achievement and the City is a proud participant in this superfund clean-up. And with that, I thank you for joining us to connect with this land, to realize its potential as a recreation site, and to restore help ecological function to its riverbank. Thank you.