

River Keepers

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

this is by and large not a good sampling contract," said Cassie Cohen, executive director of the Portland Harbor Community Coalition. "It's a sampling contract that benefits the polluters more than it benefits the health of the river, or the health of the people."

The advocacy group's mission is to keep the clean-up efforts on track and to make sure the work benefits the community. Members

are especially concerned about impacts on people who rely on the river for sustenance and the disproportionate impact of exposure to toxins in local African American, Native American and immigrant communities.

A group of companies with historical ties to steel making, chemical manufacturing, and iron works, identified as Schnitzer, Evraz, Arkema and the Marine Group were identified in EPA documents as the parties who ne-

gotiated with the agency to create the sampling plan.

Members of the coalition said the same companies met with EPA officials in secret earlier this year to try and delay clean-up efforts another 5 or 10 years. Their participation was only made public with the release of the sampling plan.

"The sampling plan that's emerged is problematic. We are definitely concerned that these four polluters were able to significantly weaken what we'd expected to see in the sampling plan," said Bob Sallinger, a member of

planning plan was made without a public review process and "speaks to the lack of transparency" of the federal agency. No explanation was given as to why those four industries were chosen in the negotiations out of the over 150 private and public organizations identified as responsible polluting parties, including Port of Portland, Chevron U.S.A., Inc., Phillips 66 Company and the Union Pacific Railroad.

"Ultimately it's, you know, it's the health of the river and the health of our community that was undermined by this process,"

"By cooperating with the state, tribal nations, other federal partners and the responsible parties, we will keep the cleanup moving toward our shared goals of reducing risks to people and the environment, and returning the Lower Willamette to a healthier and more vital working waterway for all," EPA administrator Scott Pruitt said.

In addition to small mouth bass tissue, the sample plan will test river sediment and surface water for contaminants such as polychlorinated biphenyls, a cancerous chemical that also causes

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Bottom line is we think that this is by and large not a good sampling contract. It's a sampling contract that benefits the polluters more than it benefits the health of the river, or the health of the people.

— Cassie Cohen, executive director of the Portland Harbor Community Coalition







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the coalition and the conservation director for the Portland Audubon Society.

According to Sallinger, more extensive testing is the best way to evaluate future risks to the community and provide the information necessary to determine "whether the cleanup reaches its goals or not. And so this is a pretty important piece of the puzzle," he told the Portland Observer.

"There needs to be additional data collected and we're going to be pressing EPA to identify the party for collecting those important remaining data," the DEQ's Kevin Parrett said, echoing Sallinger's point.

Sallinger said the new sam-

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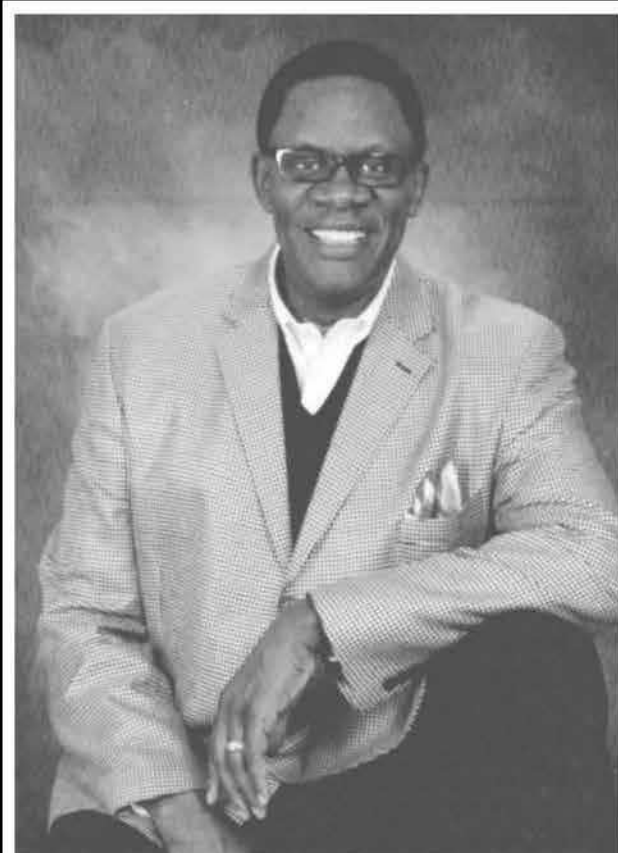
The sampling plan comes a year after the EPA made a Final Record of Decision for the Superfund Site, an official plan to get the river cleaned up. Since then, the Trump Administration has proposed budget cuts to the EPA as well as mass buyouts in the agency. The agency lost over 700 employees, including 200 scientists last year.

But in early December the EPA announced the Superfund Site as one of 21 sites it plans to target for "intense and immediate action" across the country. And EPA has stated that it is committed to sticking with clean up plans laid out in the record of decision.

reproductive issues. The toxins have accumulated in the river over the better part of a century from industrial lumber mills, shipyards, and chemical manufacturing.

Sallinger holds on to hope that there may be opportunities to remedy the deficiencies in the EPA's sampling plan as negotiations with responsible parties continue to unfold over the next several years.

"What we hope to see going forward is a lot more transparency and we hope that the EPA will come back and realize that the [wildlife] sampling that was omitted needs to be restored," he said.



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