

# Portlanders blast EPA for Superfund cleanup

\$746 million project a 30-year process

By KRISTENA HANSEN  
Associated Press

PORTLAND — A 10-mile stretch of the Willamette River — the iconic body of water flowing directly through one of America's most environmentally-conscious cities — could soon be teeming with massive equipment and crews tasked with cleaning up more than a century's-worth of hazardous contaminants from industrial use.

The federal government's \$746 million-cleanup plan for Portland Harbor was revealed two weeks ago, ending a 16-year wait after the polluted area gained status as a Superfund site by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

But the long-awaited proposal — a 30 year process that'd involve cleaning up a tiny portion of the area, while leaving the rest to recover naturally — was blasted by environmentalists and community leaders, who say it'll take too long and won't be enough to make the water and riverbed safe for the area's families and wildlife.

Just before the EPA's first public hearing downtown Portland Friday, protesters gathered urged residents to voice their opposition over the next 90 days, the window for public comment that the EPA extended earlier that morning.

"Allowing these toxins to even remain in the river, to be covered up or to be washed down into the Columbia River is unacceptable, and even more than being unacceptable, it's a violation of human rights," said Rose Longoria, regional superfund cleanup projects coordinator with Yakama Nation Fisheries. "And on top of that, it's a violation of the Yakima Nation's treaty rights."



Water quality in the Willamette River, shown here from Southeast Portland looking north to downtown, declines in its lower stretch as it nears the Columbia.

Eric Mortenson/Capital Press

Under the proposal, roughly 200 acres of the site's most toxic parts would be under construction for seven years. Sediment polluted with heavy metals and various carcinogenic chemicals would be removed or covered by a man-made barrier, called dredging and capping. Less severe contamination in the remaining 2,000 or so acres would be left to recover on its own, which will take an estimated 30 years overall.

EPA officials say the current proposal is much cheaper and less disruptive to the environment than some of the other options they were considering. The agency could finalize its proposal before year-end.

The Port of Portland, which owns much of the land in the Superfund site, and some of the companies considered potentially responsible for the pollution and financing some costs are also opposing the project.

Seven companies who've agreed to take some of that responsibility — including Union Pacific Railroad, Chevron and TOC Holdings Co. —

filed a legal dispute this week with the EPA. They criticized the plan in 22-page letter as a "rushed" decision.

The letter said the end-goal isn't achievable, "requires unnecessary treatment, and will be far more disruptive than described by EPA. Further, the cleanup will take much longer to implement than predicted by EPA and will likely cost far more than estimated by EPA."

Port of Portland officials took issue with some of the areas targeted for the cleanup and also the cost estimates, which they called "overly optimistic."

"While we were intrigued by the more than \$600 million drop in the cost of EPA's preferred remedy, a closer look left us perplexed," Curtis Robinhold, Port deputy director, wrote to federal regulators this week. "Costs dropped, but there was little actual change in the plan for cleanup ... meaning the public is not informed about the true higher anticipated cost of the cleanup or the benefits that different cleanup alternatives would achieve."

## Northwest Natural estimates a tax increase of \$11-\$14 million under Initiative Petition 28

By PARIS ACHEN  
Capital Bureau

Northwest Natural estimates it faces an \$11 million to \$14 million annual tax hike if a controversial corporate sales tax measure wins voter approval in November.

Recouping that cost would likely entail raising customers' natural gas utility rates by at least 2 percent, after five rate decreases in the last several years, a company spokeswoman said Friday.

The gas company's estimates follow an analysis by the nonpartisan Legislative Revenue Office in May that showed Initiative Petition 28 would act largely as a sales tax on consumers. A middle-income family could see an increase in costs of about \$600 per year for a middle-income family, according to the report.

If passed, the measure would impose on certain corporations an additional 2.5 percent tax on sales greater than \$25 million in Oregon.

Revenue from Initiative Petition 28 could infuse state coffers with about \$3 billion a year, stabilizing the state

**"This is yet another example of huge corporations using scare tactics to avoid funding our schools and critical services"**

— Katherine Driessen, Spokeswoman for A Better Oregon

budget and growing public sector jobs by nearly 18,000 in the next five years.

Backers of the tax measure are pushing for that revenue to go toward education, senior services and health care.

Northwest Natural's estimates illustrate how the tax could impact businesses and consumers.

The Legislative Revenue Office estimated that the tax would "dampen" the economy by slowing job growth in the private sector by 38,200.

Another report by the Oregon Office of Economic Analysis found the average company subject to the tax could see their corporate taxes jump from \$200,000 to \$2.2 million per year.

Northwest Natural, which serves about 640,000 customers in Oregon, now

pays about \$6 million per year in state corporate taxes, said Melissa Moore, spokeswoman for Northwest Natural. Under IP 28, the company's corporate taxes could double or triple to up to \$20 million, Moore said.

The estimated 2-percent gas rate hike from IP 28 accounts only for the additional cost in corporate taxes. Northwest Natural also anticipates additional indirect costs to its operations such as an increase in the prices of pipes, valves, vehicles, and insurance. Those costs could drive up rates further, Moore said.

"We support education and social services, but we don't see this as the way to do it," Moore said. "We are opposed to IP 28 because it's a regressive tax that will increase costs to our residential and business customers."

A Better Oregon, the union-backed nonprofit campaigning for the measure, said Northwest Natural's numbers are inaccurate.

"Northwest Natural paid only \$24,000 in state income taxes in 2014, a tiny percent of the \$100 million in profits it made that year," said Katherine Driessen, a spokeswoman for A Better Oregon. "So not only can the company pay more in taxes, it absolutely should."

She noted that the Oregon Public Utility Commission would have to approve any rate increases, and that Northwest Natural could deduct part of the state corporate tax from their federal taxes.

"This is yet another example of huge corporations using scare tactics to avoid funding our schools and critical services," she said.

The Public Utility Commission has to approve any utility rate hikes, but tax increases are one reason that the commission would consider granting a rate jump, said Michael Dougherty, PUC's chief operations officer.

### BRIEFLY

#### Fourth suspect arrested for killing pregnant Portlander

PORTLAND (AP) — A fourth man has been arrested in the 2014 killing of a pregnant Portland woman.

The Portland Police Bureau said Friday that 24-year-old Kelani Brown was booked into jail on a charge of murder and will be arraigned early next week. The other defendants were charged in April.

The killing described by police as gang-associated happened Aug. 17, 2014.

About an hour before sunrise, men burst into a southeast Portland apartment and threatened a woman. After realizing they were in the wrong place, the men found the unit they were looking for and opened fire.

The victim was the mother of a 1-year-old boy and in the early stages of pregnancy.

trespassing. Oregon law allows a person to use deadly physical force against someone trying to burglarize their home.

#### Gov. Brown picks nominee for OSP superintendent

BEND (AP) — Oregon Gov. Kate Brown has nominated state police Maj. Travis Hampton for Oregon State Police superintendent.

The *Bulletin* reports that Hampton will begin the job July 1 if he is approved by the state Senate.

According to the governor's office, Hampton is a Deschutes County resident who has been with Oregon State Police for 25 years and leads the department's field operations bureau. He started as a cadet, became a trooper in Coos Bay and was promoted to captain in 2004.

The Oregon State Sheriff's Association and the Oregon Association of Chief of Police have publicly praised Brown's choice.

#### U.S. Presbyterian church picks first black leader

PORTLAND (AP) — The largest Presbyterian denomination in the U.S. has elected its first African-American top executive.

The Rev. Herbert Nelson won an overwhelming majority of votes Friday during the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in Portland.

Nelson succeeds the Rev. Grady Parsons, who served two terms in the position and declined to seek re-election.

Nelson previously directed the church's public policy office in Washington. He's a graduate of Johnson C. Smith University and holds a doctorate from the Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary. He and his wife have one daughter.

Like other denominations, the Louisville, Kentucky-based Presbyterian church has been shrinking. It now has 1.6 million members and is overwhelmingly white.

Nelson urged Presbyterians to look beyond preserving the church toward reaching out more broadly and diversifying their membership.

#### Mom of child killed by window blinds cord sues

PORTLAND (AP) — The mother of a 3-year-old girl who died after being strangled by a window blinds cord in a Clackamas County apartment has filed a \$4 million lawsuit.

The *Oregonian* reports Sahrye Imani Hardy had been visiting a resident at Pineview Apartments with her mother last year when she became entangled in a dangling cord.

The suit alleges the apartment management company allowed cords longer than 7 inches to hang from the window covering, posing a hazard for children.

A lawyer representing Sahrye's estate says the cord cuts off a person's ability to speak or cry for help, which is why Sahrye's mother didn't notice her daughter was being strangled until it was too late.

#### Homeowner shoots naked intruding ex-NFL player

PORTLAND (AP) — Authorities say a homeowner in Portland shot an intruder who turned out to be former Detroit Lions cornerback Stanley Wilson II.

The Multnomah County Sheriff's Office tells *The Oregonian* for a story published Thursday that Wilson tried to break through the back window of a multimillion-dollar home. He's hospitalized but expected to recover.

Sheriff's Capt. Steve Alexander says he can't give details on the extent of the 33-year-old's injuries or why he was naked and trying to get into the house Wednesday.

Wilson, whose NFL career ended in 2008 after an injury, has been arrested on suspicion of first-degree burglary and first-degree

#### Second suspect charged in Walla Walla slaying

WALLA WALLA (AP) — A second suspect has been charged in connection with last summer's slayings of a Walla Walla couple.

The *Union-Bulletin* reports that 26-year-old Jose Alejandro Lozano faces two counts of first-degree murder for his role in the fatal shootings of Janette Rojas Balderas and her boyfriend, Jon Cody Cano. Another suspect, 22-year-old Jose Manuel Quintero, is awaiting trial on charges of murder and unlawful possession of a firearm.

Authorities believe there was a third suspect involved in the crime, who has yet to be charged.

Officials say 34-year-old Rojas Balderas and 38-year-old Cano were in the front yard of the woman's home on Aug. 7, 2015 when Quintero and another suspect gunned them down. They say Lozano drove the shooters to and from the scene of the attack.

## TrackTown USA asks for donations ahead of Trials

EUGENE (AP) — A Eugene nonprofit group organizing next month's Olympic track and field trials is short on money and looking for donations.

TrackTown USA says its cash on hand won't cover the cost of putting on the 10-day 2016 U.S. Olympic Track & Field Trials, reported *The Register-Guard*. This week, the group received a \$75,000 pledge from the city of Springfield.

TrackTown has declined to say how big its budget gap is or release specifics about its spending plan for the event.

"It's definitely not cause for concern," TrackTown USA CEO Michael Reilly told the *Register-Guard*. "We've got a small gap."

Reilly said he's confident ticket and vendor sales at the event, which begins July 1, will make up for the shortfall. He said the operating budget is around \$10 million.

TrackTown President Vin Lananna said there was also a budget gap during the last two Olympic trials in Eugene.

"But we always get there. I have reasonable confidence, I wouldn't say full confidence, but I have reasonable confidence we're going to get there," he said.

Lananna and Travel Lane County President and CEO Kari Westlund requested the \$75,000 subsidy from the Springfield City Council. The council approved the payment through hotel tax revenue.

"The event budget is facing a serious deficit," Westlund told the council, "and continued production of this event to the high standards set in 2008 and 2012 is imperative in my opinion."

Lane County has committed of \$590,000 to TrackTown between 2013 and 2020, said county spokesman Jason Davis. The money came from hotel tax

and video lottery revenue.

"If we want to host the Olympic Trials here, and want to deliver an event to the country at the level we have been, it's going to take a little bit of (public) support, a lot of sponsorship support, earned revenue, all of those things to build a budget out," Westlund said.

A TrackTown security committee has discussed how to trim costs while maintaining adequate

security at the Olympic Trials, Westlund said.

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