

Accelerating Cleanup: Portland Harbor ROD Implementation

Sean Sheldrake (sheldrake.sean@epa.gov), Eva DeMaria (demaria.eva@epa.gov), and Rebecca Chu (chu.rebecca@epa.gov) (USEPA, USA)

Background/Objectives. On January 3, 2017, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued the Record of Decision (ROD), 17 years after site listing, describing the selected remedy for the in-river portion of the Portland Harbor Superfund Site (Site) in Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon. EPA's goal is to proceed with cleanup as expeditiously as possible, while working with the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality to ensure upland sources of contamination are controlled such that in-water design and construction sequencing can proceed.

Approach/Activities. The ROD addresses an approximately 10-mile reach of the lower Willamette River. Monitored natural recovery (MNR) is applied to most of the river while dredging and/or capping are applied to smaller sediment management areas (SMAs). The ROD provides a decision tree process for technology assignments within SMAs which allows for flexibilities in design, construction, and changes in land use. The ability to design the remedy within SMAs allows the overall project schedule to advance as other necessary processes are conducted in parallel (e.g., Consent Decree negotiations for implementation of the remedial action). Even in a complex, industrial river system, the overall work can be accomplished without unnecessary delay by sequencing capping work in a thoughtful manner post dredging.

Results/Lessons Learned. Developing consistent design protocols is useful in undertaking multiple concurrent SMA design efforts. Parties participating in early design work have a unique opportunity to be inventive in the design process and help influence and advance the overall harbor cleanup schedule and quality of the implementation. While site allocation processes can be complicated and time-consuming, advancement of site cleanup can be achieved by proceeding with SMA designs in parallel with baseline sampling efforts as well as allocation and overall settlement negotiations. This ensures that the business community can proceed with normal operations in a less encumbered manner with an expeditious cleanup. This is consistent with EPA's mission to protect human health and the environment by ensuring exposures are reduced or mitigated in a timely manner.