



# Willamette Cove Summary



## Background

Willamette Cove is located within the Portland Harbor superfund site. It is a 27-acre parcel of land on the east side of the Willamette River, just north of the railroad bridge. Since the 1930s, it has been the location of many industrial activities, including a plywood mill, a barrel-making plant and a ship repair dry-dock facility. Metro purchased the site in 1996 to develop it into an urban natural area and to extend the Willamette Greenway trail system.

The Oregon Public Health Division Environmental Health Assessment Program (EHAP) reviewed soil samples collected between 2001 and 2010. EHAP reported on the results in a health consultation for the part of Willamette Cove known as the East Parcel Beach.



## What was found?

High levels of lead were found in three soil samples at the East Parcel Beach. More information is needed to determine the extent of lead and other chemical contamination, but in the meantime, EHAP considers this an area of public health concern. We recommend a more comprehensive sampling of the Willamette Cove area. Also, there are numerous physical and safety hazards on the East Parcel Beach, including underwater hazards, buried metal rebar and other debris.

## Site characteristics

Many trails lead to and through the Willamette Cove area and people are regularly seen walking their dogs, fishing or jogging. During site visits, public health officials observed numerous signs of activities on and near the East Parcel Beach that could put people's health at risk. There are "No Trespassing" signs located on the beach, and throughout the property, along with signs warning the public of contamination.

## What do I need to know about lead?

There is no safe level of lead exposure, especially for children and pregnant and nursing women. Children are especially susceptible to the effects of lead and can be permanently harmed by it. Lead poisoning can cause reading, learning and behavioral problems; slowed growth; brain damage; and lowered intelligence. Children exposed to lead may not look or act sick.

## What is going to happen next?

The report made several public health recommendations:

### For the public:

- We recommend the public stay away from Willamette Cove. In particular, children and pregnant and nursing women should avoid the area.
- No one should picnic, camp, sit in the sand or otherwise engage in activities on the East Parcel Beach at Willamette Cove.
- If people choose to walk through this area, including those walking dogs, they should remove shoes before entering the home, and wash the dog's feet and legs thoroughly before allowing into the home.

### For Metro:

- Maintain current site closure and continue efforts to keep people from camping, making fires or recreating on the East Parcel Beach.
- Consider ways to eliminate physical hazards.
- Work with community members to identify more effective ways of keeping people out of the area.

### For federal and state agencies:

- Agencies should prioritize the Willamette Cove site sampling and clean-up because the site is easily accessed and heavily used by the public.





The full report can be found at [www.healthoregon.org/ehap](http://www.healthoregon.org/ehap).



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Environmental Health Assessment Program

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