Senator Jeff Merkley – (D, OR)
Rep. Peter De Fazio – (D, OR)

PORTLAND HARBOR SUPERFUND SITE

QUESTION: What is the status of cleanup at the Portland Harbor Superfund Site?

ANSWER:

- EPA received the revised Draft Remedial Investigation (RI) report for Portland from the Lower Willamette Group (LWG) in August 2011. The human health risk assessment of the report concludes that the highest human health risk at the site is from consumption of resident fish, which are contaminated with PCBs, and other contaminants. The LWG is scheduled to submit the draft Feasibility Study (FS) on March 30, 2012. EPA will make this draft report available to the public for concurrent review. Depending on the quality of the deliverables, EPA anticipates approving the RI/FS in 2012 and issuing the Proposed Plan for public comment in 2013.

- The LWG and non-LWG potentially responsible parties (PRPs) have raised concerns about the conservative human health risk assessment assumptions, including fish consumption rates, and the lack of a site specific fish consumption studies at this Site.

- Early action at Terminal 4 has reduced risk from contaminated sediments in Slip 3. Additional early cleanup action adjacent to the GASCO site involved removal of highly contaminated sediment.

- Oregon issued a fish advisory in June 2004 based on elevated polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB) levels in fish. Multi-lingual warning signs are posted and protecting the health of Tribal members remains a concern.

BACKGROUND:

- Portland Harbor was added to the NPL in December 2000. The site encompasses the contaminated Willamette River sediments, including all upland sources covering approximately eleven miles from near downtown Portland to the Columbia Slough near the confluence with the Columbia River. The Site has elevated levels of metals (copper, lead, and zinc), pesticides, PCBs, petroleum products, polyaromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), phthalates, and dioxin/furans.

- The lower reach of the Willamette River is designated critical habitat and provides a migratory route for several protected species, including Chinook salmon, steelhead trout, and Pacific lamprey.

- The Lower Willamette Group is a group of potentially responsible parties that is conducting the RI/FS under EPA oversight. EPA is joined in oversight by ODEQ, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and six Tribal governments (Yakama, Grande Ronde, Siletz, Warm Springs, Umatilla and Nez Perce Tribes).

- The Portland Harbor Citizens Advisory Group plays an active role in making sure the concerns of the community are considered throughout the investigation.

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CONGRESSIONAL INQUIRIES: In August 2011 Congressman Blumenauer hosted a meeting with EPA, PRP representatives, and others to discuss the status of the site and tour the project area. Senator Wyden, Senator Merkley and Congressman Schrader attended the meeting and site tour. Congressmen Blumenauer and Schrader, and Senators Wyden and Merkley sent a follow-up letter to EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson in December 2012 with specific questions regarding the Portland Harbor risk assessments, exposure assumptions and cleanup levels. The EPA Region 10 administrator provided a response in January 2012. Congressmen Blumenauer and Schrader and Senator Wyden have previously asked for information on schedule, cost and adequacy of EPA resources for the FS.