



Oregon Department of Environmental Quality

News Release

Date: May 19, 2026

DEQ Approves Agreement with Portland Botanical Gardens for Future Redevelopment of McCormick & Baxter Superfund Site

PORTLAND, Ore. — The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality has entered into a prospective purchaser agreement with the nonprofit organization [Portland Botanical Gardens](#) for the future redevelopment of the McCormick & Baxter Superfund site in North Portland.

The agreement supports the beneficial reuse of the property while ensuring the environmental cleanup remedy remains protective of human health and the environment. Portland Botanical Gardens plans to develop botanical gardens, roughly 10 acres of public green space, a connection to the Willamette River Greenway Trail, public access to the Willamette River and educational and research spaces.

The agreement includes conditions requiring:

- Long-term monitoring and protections for the cleanup remedy.
- Public access to green space and the Willamette River.
- Construction of the Willamette River Greenway Trail across the property.
- Habitat improvements and conservation of riparian areas.
- Tribal and community engagement plans.
- An integrated pest management plan and invasive species screening policy.
- DEQ review and approval of development plans before construction activities begin.
- Portland Botanical Gardens must demonstrate at least \$3 million in available funding within one year before DEQ will approve acquisition of the property.
- Portland Botanical Gardens must pay DEQ \$1.195 million upon acquisition of the property to reimburse a portion of past cleanup costs.

“For decades, North Portland communities have carried the impacts of industrial contamination along the North Reach of the Willamette River,” said Christine Svetkovich, DEQ northwest region

administrator. “This agreement creates an opportunity to transform this property into a publicly accessible community asset while ensuring the cleanup remedy remains protective in the long term.”

DEQ’s prospective purchaser agreement program was created in 1995 through amendments to Oregon’s environmental cleanup law. These agreements expedite the cleanup and redevelopment of contaminated properties that might otherwise remain vacant or underused because of environmental liabilities associated with purchasing contaminated sites.

DEQ conducted extensive Tribal and public outreach throughout development of the proposed agreement after it received a prospective purchaser agreement application from Portland Botanical Gardens in 2024. The agency held a 60-day formal review and comment period from Dec. 1, 2025 through Jan. 30, 2026 that included meetings with Tribes and the public, as well as direct outreach to community organizations, elected officials and government agencies.

The McCormick & Baxter Creosoting Co. operated at the site as an industrial wood treatment facility from 1944 to 1991. Its operations contaminated the soil, groundwater and river sediment with wood-treating chemicals. After the company declared bankruptcy in 1991, DEQ and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency oversaw a more than \$70 million cleanup of the property and adjacent river areas.

Cleanup was completed in 2005, which included the removal of contaminated surface soil and installation of a groundwater barrier wall, an upland soil cap and in-water sediment cap in the Willamette River to safely isolate remaining contamination. DEQ and EPA continue long-term monitoring and maintenance of the remedy.

DEQ’s approval of the agreement does not immediately transfer ownership of the property to Portland Botanical Gardens. Before DEQ approves the property transaction, Portland Botanical Gardens must satisfy financial and other requirements established in the agreement within one year.

EPA is separately negotiating a federal prospective purchaser agreement with Portland Botanical Gardens. The agency is expected to release its agreement for public review and comment soon in the Federal Register.

Additional information, including the DEQ-issued prospective purchaser agreement, DEQ’s response to comments and supporting materials, are available online at ordeq.org/mccormick-baxter.

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