



THE ECONOMY AND THE ENVIRONMENT IN THE LOWER WILLAMETTE

The Cleanup in the Context of the
Ecological and Economic Health of
the Willamette River

The Lower Willamette Has Been In Trouble Ecologically For Some Time

- And it still is—it is not yet healthy
- Listed as impaired water under the Clean Water Act
- Listed populations of salmon and steelhead under the Endangered Species Act
- Listed as a federal Superfund site with Natural Resource Damages issues

Economic Uncertainties Abound

- Unusually weak overall economy
- Especially fragile marine-dependent economy
- Lack of Investment and long-term commitments in contaminated areas of the harbor
- Uncertainty as to current and future environmental obligations
- Implications for numerous jobs and substantial economic activity in the region

A solid approach to the economy and the environment

- Not useful to think of these solely or even primarily as adversarial or in opposition
- They are uneasy, but inevitable partners in the river's future—no way to separate them
- Environment is no more stable than the economy in the area—and that in itself perpetuates economic uncertainty
- Need to figure out how to assure ecological restoration and a stable economic future at the same time—not just empty rhetoric

How do we get there?

- Achieve an expeditious and robust in-water cleanup—
Know what to do. Do it right. Do it once. Check to be sure it's working.
- Avoid risk of recontamination by ensuring control of upland sources and upstream contributions. Not as easy as it sounds—e.g., Tacoma and Duwamish.
- Resolve Natural Resource Damages with Trustees concurrently with cleanup by pursuing a cooperative resolution of NRDA liability.
- Finish the big pipe project to meet Clean Water Act.

Getting there part 2

- Implement the Portland Watershed Management Plan (stormwater management and restoration projects on watershed scale).
- Implement the Portland North Reach Plan regulatory and mitigation obligations and economic projects.
- Promote appropriate ways to allow redevelopment of contaminated upland and riverfront sites (Portland Harbor Redevelopment Initiative).
- Support related initiatives—e.g., see Lower Columbia River Estuary Partnership toxics study to get in front of emerging problems for a change (at www.lcrep.org).
- Work to integrate efforts for efficiencies and synergies.

The Upshot

- All these efforts unavoidably must address both environmental restoration and economic stability.
- Can't have one without the other in any lasting real world way.
- All the above are difficult initiatives and success is far from assured for any of them.
- None will get the job done in isolation.

Money is not the only answer, but it is a driving question

- Will need major additional funding to make progress on any of these initiatives.
- Where will it come from?
- Need to consider the impact of upgraded regulations and real incentives—they are not just a cost.
- The failure to regulate effectively, or to put in place incentives that promote strong action, will only pass on restoration funding needs to the future—and that will require even more dollars.
- Inaction may save some money now, but the price will be paid later and at a higher level.

Federal laws can't and won't do it alone

- Each is important, but even all together they will not provide sufficient restoration of function in the Lower Willamette
- Clean Water Act
- Endangered Species Act
- Federal Superfund statute (CERCLA & NRDA)
- Water Resources Development Act

River Renaissance Or....

- The grand integrator?
- An as yet unfulfilled promise that is still relevant—a work in progress.
- Need a comprehensive and integrated approach to the Lower Willamette.
- All plans need to be explicitly coordinated so we don't have a bad version of dueling banjos or misplaced emphasis.
- That's a major task that is still in front of us.